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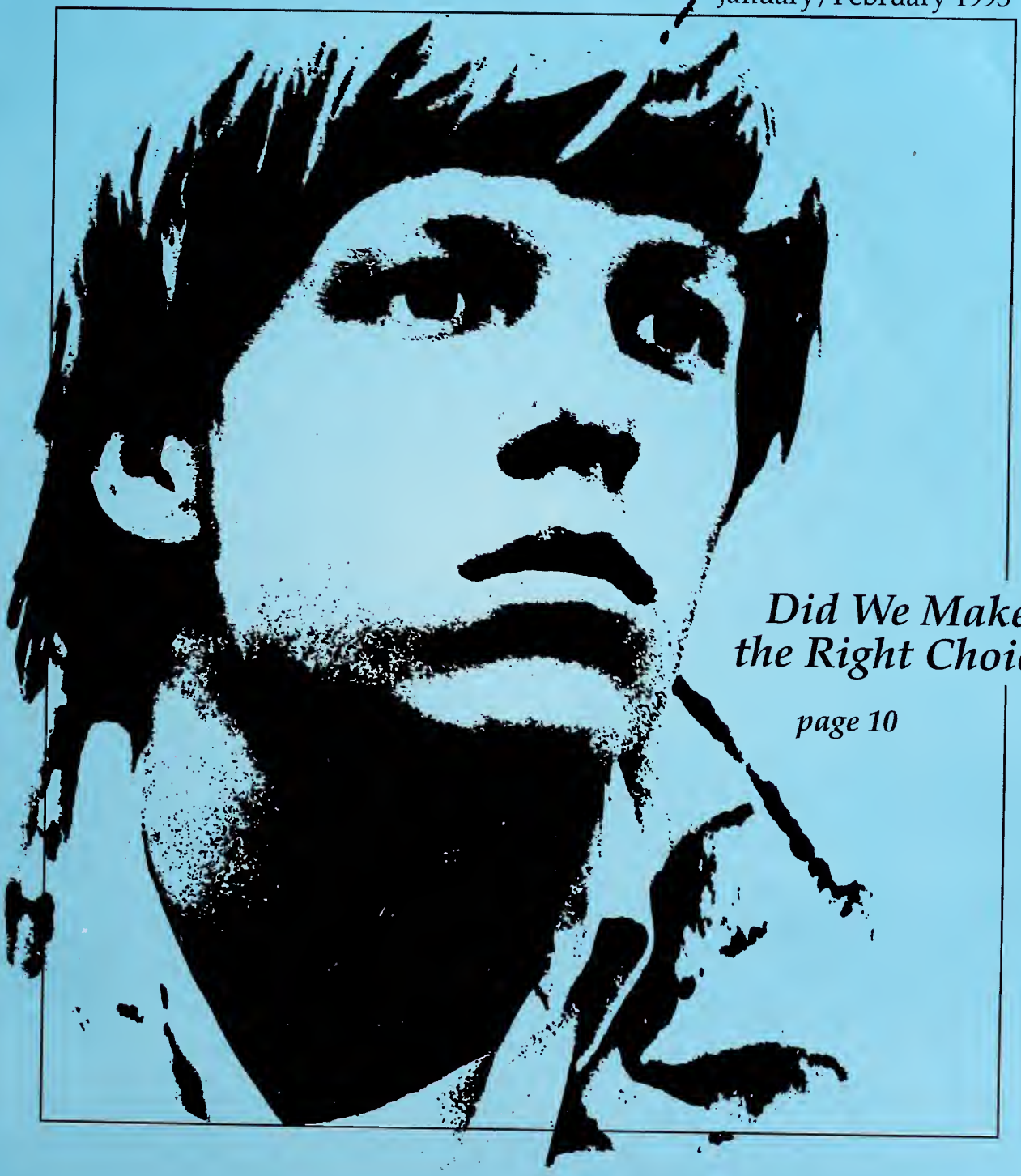
Advent Christian WITNESS

January/February 1993



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"Did we make the right choice?" That's the question this pastoral family faced as they struggled to find the best way to help their son.

photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

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FROM THE EDITOR

Somalia: Risky But Right

THE PROPHET Amos opens his Old Testament book with a series of judgments against the nations of his day. Their endless wars and barbaric acts against each other moved God to declare his wrath against them. In declaring judgment against Tyre, God declares. "I will not turn back my wrath, because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood" (Amos 1:9).

Are we responsible to treat those less fortunate than ourselves with dignity, fairness, and respect? Over and over, the Bible declares "Yes, we are." And through Amos, God declares that the principle applies to nations as well as individuals. As one reads the words of Amos' prophecy, the message is clear: Judgment is sure for those people and nations who focus on their material wealth and possessions at the expense of justice for the poor and the innocent.

Bringing hope to a country torn by anarchy

Amos' words are on my mind as I see the images of starving children and watch soldiers unload their supplies in Somalia. Hopefully, their efforts will help save lives and bring a fresh start to a nation plagued by anarchy, greed, violence, and famine.

There's no question that the motives for intervening in Somalia are good. Thousands of innocent adults and children are being terrorized to the point of starvation. They need help and I for one am grateful to see us trying to help.

But while our motives are good, the task is much more difficult than we've been led to believe. The editors of the *The New Republic* put it well when they write, "We are intruding into a political culture that is essentially tribal and feudal, in which ancient prejudices and raw relations of power will matter more than notions of fairness or theories of justice. The lives that we save in Somalia will continue to be lived in a brutal environment."

It will take much more than a short-term commitment of American troops to restore hope in Somalia—a nation that for the last two years has not even had a government.

It will take a partnership of nations willing to invest time, energy, and resources. And it will take the willingness of leaders in the various Somali factions and clans to put aside their differences and work towards building a nation out of anarchy.

Both of those tasks will be difficult. The chances of success do not appear that good. But if we succeed over the coming months and years, perhaps we can learn some lessons that will help bring hope to other hopeless places—Liberia, Bosnia, Sudan, and others. And perhaps, we'll be reminded of the immense power of sin and evil in our world. It's not politically correct to talk about evil anymore. That was supposed to disappear with the end of the Cold War. But sin and evil are back stronger than ever—manifesting themselves in events such as the ethnic-cleansing in Bosnia and the anarchy and gang-violence in Liberia and Somalia. Ignoring evil, as so many American isolationists seemed inclined to do, will only make the world less stable.

I'm enough of a realist to know that there will always be poverty, famine, violence, and other forms of evil throughout the world. Only the return of Jesus Christ will stop that. No one nation can solve all the problems in the world. But to ignore those problems is to risk God's judgment upon us. I'm pleased that we're trying to help in Somalia. Despite all of the risks, despite all of the major problems, despite all of the limits we face—it's morally and ethically the right thing to do. ❑

Looking for Happiness in all the wrong places

Clayton Blackstone
Lewiston, Idaho

THE POPULAR novel and film *Bright Lights, Big City* details a Yuppie's endless pursuit of pleasure through the bars and hotels of Manhattan. A reviewer in *Newsweek* wryly observed that the main character never seemed to actually enjoy himself when he was out having fun. Instead, he epitomized "a peculiarly '80s notion: that the pursuit of good times could be a joyless function."

During a week-long series of interviews on ABC's "Good Morning America," Dr. Brenda Wade proposed several simple steps for achieving happiness. The clinical psychologist urged folks to "set goals, think positive thoughts, get support, stay calm, develop an inner life, and give service." She explained that we could nurture our spiritual centers by taking nature walks, practicing the art of meditation, and learning to think better thoughts and feel better feelings about ourselves.

The commercial which preceded her presentation offered another possibility: "Visit a hairstyling salon today because people feel happy after being on the sharp end of someone's well-trained scissors."

But the euphoria fades as the hair grows. In fact, we receive little in return on the energy we invest in the pursuit of pleasure. The glory loses its luster along with the paint on new cars, the onset of middle-age spreads and age lines, the added responsibilities which accompany new homes or jobs.

Pascal wrote to a past generation, but his observation rings with prophetic clarity. "All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions . . . . Yet all men complain . . . . A test which has gone on so long, without pause or change, really ought to convince us that we are incapable of attaining the good by our own efforts . . . this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite object."

Jesus startled his followers with a strange assortment of proverbs concerning their quest for happiness. They challenge our preconceived notions as well. His claim: Happiness visits those not looking for it! "The poor in spirit, folks aware of their own sin, and don't feel worthy of it; the mourn-

ing, those nursing their wounds, and are looking for the cause of their grief; the meek, people who see themselves in light of God's grace, are too amazed by what they do have, to worry about what they don't have. Happiness, then, must be the by-product of something else."

The Master Teacher further shatters our level of comfort with his fourth Beatitude. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5-6).

A spirit-breaking read-through

The building inspector tacked up the occupancy permit. The tumbled down state of decades past had given way to sturdy walls of protection and a fine-looking house of worship. The Temple rose as only a shadow of the one it replaced, but represented an improvement in the Jerusalem skyline. The people of Israel breathed a sigh of satisfaction only to see their happiness fade quickly—the euphoria shattered by Ezra, a newcomer to the Jerusalem scene. The recently renovated city failed to impress this man with a heart for God. He wept bitterly at the spiritual condition he discovered. Because his grief struck a responsive cord deep within, they invited the scribe to take them back to their roots.

Thousands assembled in the square to hear the Law of Moses. Men and women clung to every word as Ezra's voice echoed through the streets. He read from daylight until noon as the people stood, lifting their hands and shouting, "Amen! Amen!" They bowed down. Worshiped with their faces to the ground. Wept openly.

The celebration continued for seven days, a religious party unheard of since Joshua's day. A couple of weeks later, the scene dramatically changed as God's Word continued its refining work. Fasting, sackcloth, and dusty heads replaced booths, rich food, and joyful celebration. "They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and worshiping the Lord their God."

Before the dust settled, men admitted their guilt. Honored God as just in inflicting hardship on them for their sin. Sent their foreign wives back to their mammas. "Blessed are those who hunger." A starving person possesses an all-consuming passion for food and water. Boats, houses, clothes, IRA's, and recreational property lack much appeal when hunger threatens one's survival. Lifeless gods of our own making always leave us begging for more.

The saga of Lee Atwater

The "pit bull of American politics" turned enemies into friends during the last year of his remarkable life. Few understood the striking change which overtook the former chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Lee Atwater, as a teenager, impressed Harry Dent, then South Carolina Republican Party Chairman, in a hurry to win political campaigns. As he grew older, he moved on to become a college Young Republican, then an intern in Senator Strom Thurmond's (R-SC) office.

By age 38, Atwater achieved his two goals in life: running a winning presidential campaign and becoming Chairman of the Republican Party. But when the bottom dropped out, Lee fell, strangely enough, into the arms of God. He collapsed while attending a Republican Party fundraiser. A series of tests revealed a brain tumor.

According to Atwater, "I looked into that dark abyss, and it scared the hell out of me! . . . I have found Jesus Christ. It's that simple. He's made a difference, and I'm glad I found him while there's still time."

The experience added a third goal to Lee's list: serving God on a full-time basis.

Several months before his death, he hosted a barbecue for his old friends in politics and blues music. Friends wheeled him into the large room singing his hit *Bad Boy Blues*. Then, according to friend Harry Dent, "He stopped the music and began testifying to the several hundred friends present. He told them that this was his aim for the rest of his life." Dent, who delivered the funeral sermon in Columbia, S.C., writes, "What a mighty and loving God Lee had discovered. And all it cost Lee was a good dose of repentance, a big measure of faith, and a waterfall of amazing grace from his heavenly Father who heard Lee's cry for grace and poured out rivers of living water into and through his young life."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after goodness, for they will be completely satisfied." Great news! Jesus does not require us to achieve righteousness. He simply wants us to really want it even when we fail!

An unlikely candidate for grace

She came to the well alone. At noon. Long after the other ladies returned to their homes. Women spurned her. Perhaps her flirtatious ways intimidated them. Her attraction to men may have caused them to feel a bit insecure about their own husbands. But I'm almost certain they considered themselves morally superior.

She came to the well alone to draw the day's supply of water. She left with empty pots and an overflowing heart. She discovered a stranger sitting beside the village water supply, a man willing to talk. Her race, lifestyle and gender made her an unlikely candidate for the good news he offered in exchange for a drink.

The conversation ranged far and wide. She did not understand his invitation to receive living water. As far as she knew, water didn't get any

better than this. "Are you greater than Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself?"

"Everyone who drinks from this well will be thirsty again, but everyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst.."

"I'll take some then. Sure beats coming here every day!" Jesus invited her to return with her husband, a hint that her words left her lips laced with a hint of cynicism. "I have no husband." Her confession forced truth into the open: five divorces and a live-in lover failed to fill the inner ache in the soul of this lonely woman.

Talk turned to worship, a bone of contention between Samaritans and Jews. "It's a matter of spirit and truth rather than place, " Jesus pointed out.

"I don't understand everything you are saying, but when Messiah comes, he will explain things clearly." Her response exposed the inner thirst for something more than what she knew.

"I'm the One you look for"

Hundreds from the city flocked to the well in response to the woman's report. They urged him to stay. He visited with them for two days, and many more became believers because of his Words."

Shortly after his Samaritan mission, Jesus returned to Galilee. While there, a royal official caught up with him and requested healing for his son, who was close to death. Jesus cuts to the chase. "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe."

John reports no miracles in Samaria, just lots and lots of people enjoying long, cool drinks of living water. The apostle recounts multiple Galilean miracles but little genuine belief. The difference: Samaritans lacked righteousness but wanted it, and the Jews wanted nothing more than what they had. After all, they assumed they possessed righteousness because of their special position as God's chosen people. Their interest in Jesus or any other candidate for Messiah: what he could do for them. "Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully" (Matthew 5-6 - TEV).

Sounds like

Jewish folks knew the right words to say. Most religious people do. Jewish folks did the right things. Most religious people do. But a scene from C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* illustrates the glitch in this line of reasoning.

At one point in this fictional work, Reginald, the spirit, engages in dialogue with a woman ghost, a mother whose son had died prematurely. He admonishes her to think. "Don't you see you are not beginning at all as long as you are in that state of mind? You're treating God only as a means to Michael. But the whole thickening treatment (the process of passing from spirit to substance in the world of the afterlife in this account) is learning to want God for his own sake" (Quoted from C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, p. 91-92).

> We receive little in return on the energy we invest in the pursuit of pleasure.

Read the Bible. Go to church. Do good deeds. Give more than 10% to Christian work. Teach a Sunday school class. Visit unchurched people. Leave a tract as a tip for a hard-working waitress. Never cheat on your income tax or your spouse. Sounds like righteousness. Or does it? Not according to Henri Nouwen:

"Most of my life has been built around the idea that my value depends on what I do. I made it through school. I earned my degrees and awards and I made my career. Yes, with many others, I fought my way up to a little success, a little popularity, and a little power. But . . . how violent that journey was. So marked by rivalry and competition, so pervaded with compulsion and obsession, so spotted with moments of suspicion, jealousy, resentment, and revenge.

"Oh sure, most of what I did was called ministry, the ministry of justice and peace, the ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation, the ministry of healing and wholeness. But when those who want peace are as interested in success, popularity, and power as those who want war, what then is the real difference between war and peace?"

With all due respect to Dr. Wade, our *Good Morning America* guest, we'll never find living water happiness by setting goals, thinking positive thoughts, getting support, staying calm, developing an inner life devoted to self, and serving others. Her counsel contains just enough wisdom mixed with error to be dangerous. Doctors who treat pain without identifying the cause place their patients at great risk.

Disciples who genuinely hunger and thirst for righteousness want God for his own sake. A relationship more than a miracle. Intimacy more than action. Like the children in George MacDonald's *The Castle: A Parable*, we "worship, and love, and wait. (Our) hope and expectation grow even stronger and brighter, that one day, ere long, the father will show himself amongst (us), and henceforth dwell in his house for evermore. What was once but an old legend has become the one desire of (our) hearts. And the loftiest hope is the surest of being filled."

Jesus offers an internal, eternal spring to replace temporary fixes. We've just got to want him bad enough. ❑

Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Church of New Hope (Advent Christian) and an Advent Christian Witness *contributing editor.*

Can She Play With Us?

Ruth Soucier
Japan

THE RINGING of the phone broke my concentration as I tried to complete plans for Friday's English lesson.

"Hello," I answered with hesitation. I wasn't expecting a phone call so I wasn't sure who it would be. I was pulling Japanese phrases to the front of my mind just in case this occasion called for them.

"Rutsu-san? Sawamura desu."

"Hai. Konichiwa." Relief. It was Mrs. Sawamura, one of the ladies from church.

"Are you busy Saturday afternoon? If you aren't, could you come to my house and talk to some neighborhood children about America?"

"Hmm. This Saturday? No, I'm not busy. Sure, I'll come. What time?"

"From two to three. Please bring pictures if you have any. See you Saturday."

"O.K. Bye."

I hung up the phone and went back to my planning. Sometime between thinking of children's songs and making flashcards, reality hit me. I just committed myself to spend an hour with children whose language I cannot speak. At least Mrs. Sawamura would be there to translate. The more I pondered the situation the more I wished I'd had plans for Saturday!

Quickly, I stopped that train of thought. I reminded myself I was in Japan for one reason—to share myself with the Japanese people. God was answering my daily prayers by giving me opportunities to share. Of course, Lord, give me the right words.

Saturday afternoon soon came. On the five-minute walk to the Sawamura's home, I prayed for words to say and a good rapport with the kids. As I walked into the living room, six elementary school children whispered to each other. I smiled, introduced myself in Japanese and began showing pictures and answering questions, (with the help of Mrs. Sawamura, of course). The hour went by quickly and painlessly. As I got ready to leave, the kids began whispering to each other (as if I could understand what they were saying)!

"Rutsu-san, they want to know if you'll play with them. I told them you were much older than they."

"I'm not that old! I can play with them for a little while."

The invitation took me by surprise. (I don't know why since this past year has been nothing but surprises!)

I soon found myself walking down the street like the Pied Piper. Many people had to look twice as we walked past them. It's not common to see a foreigner walking with six Japanese children.

We played badminton at a nearby park for almost an hour. At times communication was hard, but most of the time there were smiles and laughter. I don't know what their impression of me was, but I was impressed with their acceptance of me and their effort to include me in their group. For these children, age, nationality, even language barriers didn't stop them from reaching out to a stranger. I initially went to share and teach them about America, and I left feeling that

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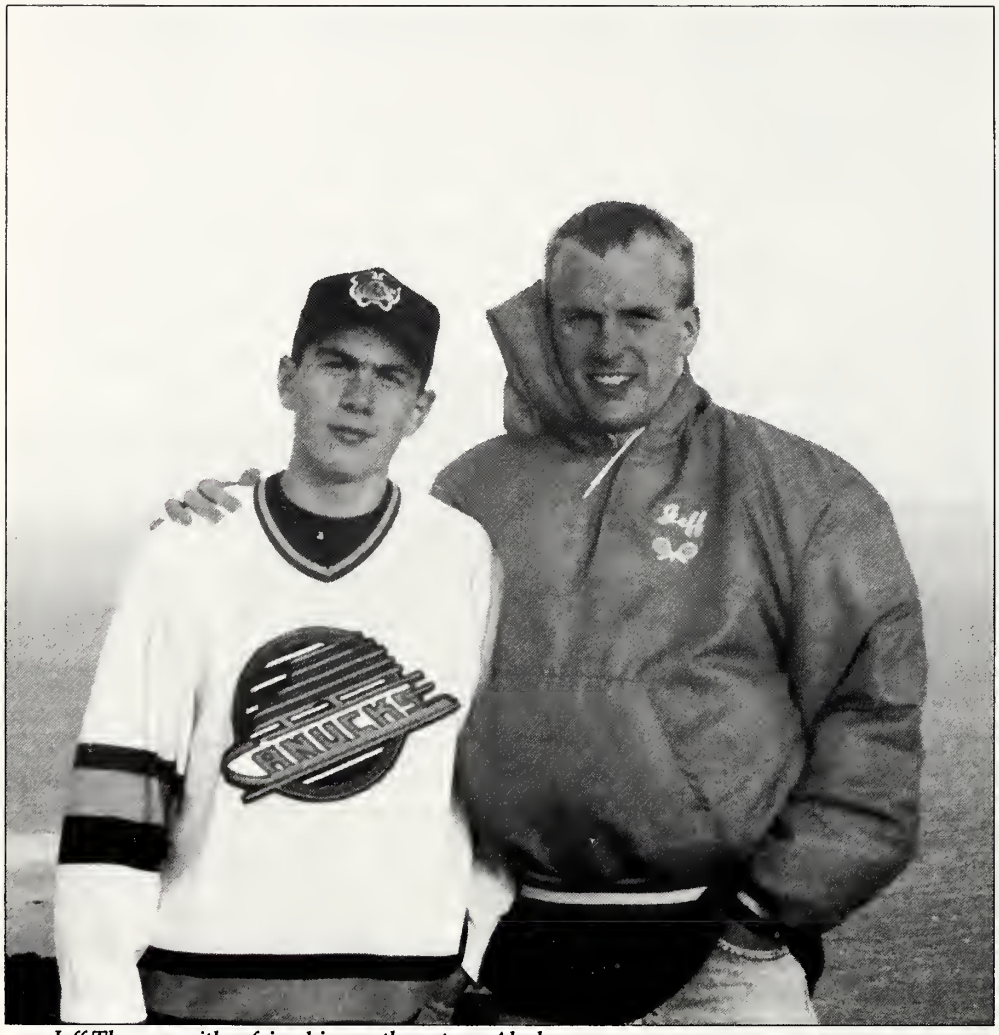

Jeff Thomas with a friend in southwestern Alaska.

Jeff Thomas and David McCarthy
Aurora, Illinois

LAST SUMMER I spent eight weeks as a short-term missionary in Alaska. For some time I'd wanted to prove to myself that I could make a sacrifice for the Lord, so I told him I would give him my summer if he provided an open door for ministry. The opening came when I was accepted by InterAct Ministries and, in early June, I flew to Anchorage.

After a brief orientation, I joined a resident missionary conducting vacation Bible schools in the fishing villages of Kodiak Island. Located in southwestern Alaska, Kodiak Island is a beautiful spot, sometimes called the "Emerald Isle." Because of the damp, temperate climate, the Island stays green year round, while snow-capped mountains are visible in the distance.

Nothing to live for

Most residents of the Island are the Aleuts (pronounced "Al-ee-oots") and are thought to be of Eskimo stock. Many villagers earn large sums of money through fishing, but unfortunately they waste a great deal on booze.

Alcoholism is rampant, infecting up to 90% of the residents in some of the villages we visited. With the alcoholism comes a tremendous amount of violence, and sexual abuse is off the charts. The traditional family values we at least talk about in the lower 48 states hardly exist on Kodiak.

These factors are reflected in great emptiness on the part of the people. They simply have nothing to live for. Many of them are marked by a deep-seated bitterness that surprised me. I met one man who had struggled for a long time to give his life to Christ. His hostility had nearly destroyed his family and he was in counseling with a missionary. He confessed to me, "I just don't know how to love anybody and, until I learn how, I can't be a Christian. Christians must love."

One afternoon I went for a walk with a nine-year-old boy who was filled with questions about becoming a believer. I explained what it meant to give one's life to Jesus, but the boy held back. Finally he said, "I can't become a Christian like you because I'm not white."

Attitudes like these are either taught directly or reinforced by the one group that dominates their culture, the Russian Orthodox Church. Most villages have a Russian Orthodox building, and the priests are extremely protective of their turf. In fact, in one town the local priest branded us as "heretics" and threw us out of the village. There is no ethical or moral teaching in these congregations, and no dealing with the alcoholism. The natives attend services without understanding the liturgy, which is spoken in Russian. Church involvement makes absolutely no difference in their

"You've Done What I Asked"

lifestyle.

Do the villagers have access to Bibles? It seems to be a rule of the Church that each family keep a Bible in the home, but it is seldom read. In one of our Bible schools, a boy was very excited about our lessons. I explained the importance of knowing the Bible and helped him memorize some verses. When I asked if there was a Bible in his home he said, "My mom has one, but I don't think she'll let me read it. She doesn't like for us to take it down from the refrigerator."

Believers ostracized

What touched me most about my experience was the deep faith of the Christians. It was rare to find more than one or two families in each village who knew the Lord, and these people paid a heavy price for their commitment. Believers are ostracized by everyone and, since most villagers are related, this means being cut off from family members. I talked to one person who had been a believer for five years and had finally decided to move out to a city. Despite living in the village for 50 years, he had been disowned by family and was totally shunned by the community.

And remember, these Christians don't have a church where they can turn for fellowship. Once or twice a month, a resident missionary flies in to spend time with the one or two Christian families. That's all the contact they have with believers.

I can't say that I made a difference in the lives of these people, but this experience did a great deal for my own spiritual life.

The surroundings were the most difficult I've ever been in, and for the first time I was forced to lean on Him alone. I spent a great deal of time in Bible study and prayer, and the Lord spoke to me in a fresh, real way.

The book of Ezekiel was a tremendous encouragement. The prophet was sent to people whose hearts were hard. In fact, the Lord said, "I'm sending you to people who won't believe your message and will rebuke you, but go anyway." Once Ezekiel obeyed, God said in effect, "You've done what I asked. Thank you."

I would say to those who are thinking about going on a short-term project, remember that this is God's work and that he only asks that we be faithful. Let him work, reap the results he wishes, and receive the glory.

Jeff Thomas is active in the Aurora, Illinois Advent Christian Church. He shared his story with David McCarthy, senior pastor of the Aurora Church and an Advent Christian Witness *contributing editor.*

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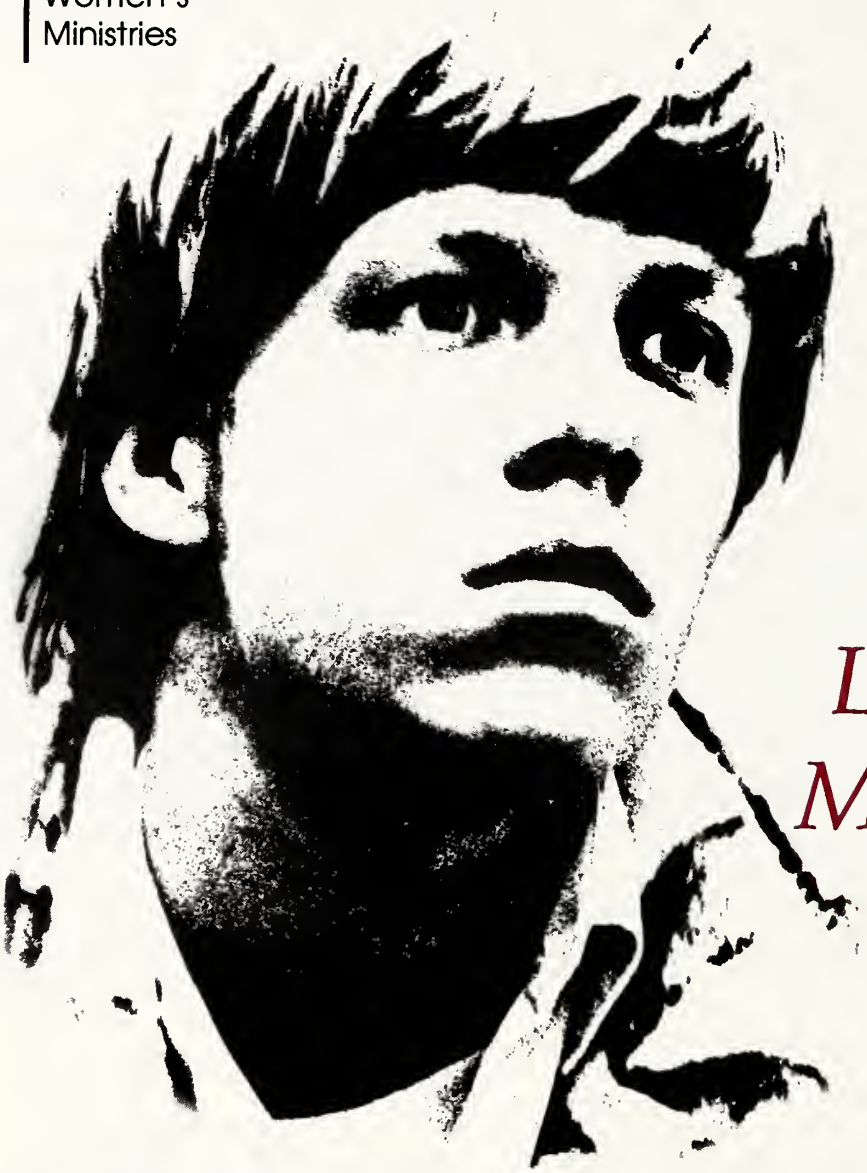

Lord, Did We Make the Right Choice?

THE COLD clinical atmosphere contributed to the feelings of dejection we all felt as we stood there waiting patiently to finish the paperwork. The floor on this wing of the hospital had a different air. Here, the nurses had a harsh abrupt manner. This place had the feeling of prison confinement, not a place of healing. Had we made the right choice? The silence in the air was deafening.

In a way, the silence was a welcome relief after the months of arguments. Our son stood there with that sullen expression on his face that had become so familiar of late. I searched his face looking for some sign of emotion knowing he must be frightened. Standing there with unkempt hair hanging over his eyes, tattered jeans, and a rock concert shirt, he looked very much like any fifteen-year-old. When did this change take place? Why wasn't I able to see it before it had gone so far?

Why us?

Drug addiction was something that happened to someone else's child, not mine! Denial was why I hadn't known sooner. The change in friends, the drop in grades from high honors to failure, the unexcused absences from a host of classes—all the evidence had been there. We had shared family talks about drugs and the dangers of addiction. He was active in the youth group at church where his father served as pastor. We spent time with our son, prayerfully preparing him for what would confront him. What happened?

"Why us?" I pondered. No answers came. The nurse and counselor entered to explain the rules to all of us. We were not allowed to visit him for the first three days. He would be in detox where they handle the withdrawal process. After that, he would be brought in with the other patients to start counseling and therapy. We were told the success rate with teens is only about five percent, the first time around.

Again we wonder, "Are we mak-

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A Woman's Guide to Wise Choices

An interview with Ruth Tucker

Ruth Tucker is a visiting professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois and author of Multiple Choices: Making Wise Choices in a Complicated World *(Zondervan Publishing House, 1992). She's widely known for her research on the role of women in the history of world missions. Here she answers questions about the principles necessary for women to make wise decisions and choices.*

What things should women consider when making decisions?

God is sovereign and rules the universe, but at the same time we are free to make our own choices. A woman does well to seek variety and options in her life, so that whether times are good or times are tough, her choices will serve her well. And in those choices we must be women of vision.

What is a woman of vision?

A woman of vision sees opportunities where others see discouragement. She is able to put her own situation in perspective. She sees others who are worse off then she and reaches out to help. She does not minimize her own problems, but neither does she exaggerate them. Most of all, she maintains a mental storehouse of options ready to draw on when they are needed.

What does the contrast between Eve and Mary offer women who are seeking God's will for their lives?

Eve and Mary are models for us today because they were women who had much in common with each other and with us. Through their differences—which lie not so much in their 'goodness' or 'badness' as in how they responded at critical junctures in their lives—we can derive principles for our own decision making.

First, when confronted with options, we must remember that we can all be "deceived by the serpent's cunning." Whether through the materialism and secularism of our society, or simply through personal pride and greed, we are often "led astray from...sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Second, when making choices we must keep God in proper focus. This can be summed up on the balance and descending order of that shopworn little triad: God—Others—Self. When that order is reversed or rearranged, our choices betray the distortion.

Explain the difference between confident and over-confident choices.

An inflated sense of self can lead to over-confidence, and we must never mistake over-confident choices for confident choices. The latter grow out of optimism rooted in our profound trust in God and from a realism that flows out of an objective assessment of ourselves. Over-confident choices, on the other hand, are often the product of self-aggrandizement, which leads to false hopes and failures.

What is the objective in making right choices?

The ultimate goal in making right choices is not to find the will of God, but to do the will of God; to have a sense that our lives have purpose, and that in the end the Lord will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" We want to have the assurance that our cumulative efforts in life—efforts that may have worn us to a frazzle—will amount to more than wood, hay, and straw. The Christian life is one choice laid on top of another, like building blocks; choices that determine what kind of structure we will end up with on Judgment Day. ❑

Interview supplied by Zondervan Press Syndicate

Missions Watch

David McCarthy

Steven and Ann Lay (Japan): Ann writes that the ordination service held for Steve during their vacation at home was a time when the entire family strengthened their commitment to serve Christ in Japan.

The Lays returned to Japan in November and began a new series of English language classes. The classes include one hour of English conversation study, followed by a thirty-minute Bible time. The Bible time is bilingual so that even beginning students understand what is presented. During December, the Lays taught about the meaning of Christmas. Eleven students are enrolled including teens, business people, and homemakers. Only one of the eleven is a Christian, and most were reading from the Bible for the first time. The Lays gave each person in the class a bilingual New Testament as a gift.

How are the sessions advertised? The Lays handed out some 300 printed announcements in their neighborhood, and one Sunday afternoon they went down to the train station and hoisted a sign reading, "Let's Speak English." Within an hour about eight inquirers responded to the invitation to learn more.

The search continues for property so that the Mission Headquarters can be moved to Kobe. Last fall, there were hopes that a large parcel near the new train station might be available, however negotiations have broken down. As they continue to look for land, the Lays remain confident that in God's time, they will find the property He wants the mission to have.

Gell Knight completes advanced degree in India

Gell Knight (left) with Advent Christian missionaries Barbara White and Marion Damon. Rev. Knight graduated from Seminary with the ThM degree and has joined the teaching staff at the School of Evangelism in Kodaikanal.

Beryl Joy Hollis
Kodaikanal, India

ON MAY 8, Gell Knight graduated from the Bangalore Seminary with the Master of Theology (ThM) degree. Marion Damon, Barbara White, and I had the privilege of attending the graduation ceremonies. Also present were his wife, son, and daughter.

Gell joined the teaching staff at the School of Evangelism last summer. While he teaches there, he is also completing a second graduate degree.

Gell Knight was one of the first students at the Kodaikanal School of Evangelism. As Gell pursued his studies, it was easy to see that he stood out as an artistic, creative, and thoughtful person who could be trained to teach others.

While still a student at the School of Evangelism, Gell planted an Advent Christian congregation in Dindigul. After he gained some pastoral experience, the India Advent Christian mission sent him to a seminary in Bangalore for graduate studies. While in seminary, he taught several classes in the School of Evangelism. His classroom preparation was excellent and he communicated his material well to students. When we asked him to teach a beginning Hebrew course, Gell went to his seminary professor asking his help in preparing a syllabus. The professor was amazed. "I've never had a student ask me for that kind of help before!" he declared. So Gell prepared his own syllabus, and his teaching was appreciated by his students. ❑

Prayer Pointers: That the Spirit of God may work in the lives of students in the Lays' language classes, creating a desire to know Christ as Savior and Lord; and that the mission will find the land needed for the new headquarters.

Austin and Dorothy Warriner (Philippines): Returning to the Philippines after a vacation in Japan, Austin and Dorothy are deeply involved with our church and the Bible college. Austin is teaching classes this semester.

In November, Oro Bible College celebrated Founder's Day with the musicale, "Then There Was Light." The music and choreography were exceptional. Alumnae/i came to mark the twenty-first anniversary of the school.

The Warriners took part in a Thanksgiving service at a small village church on the outskirts of Cagayan. Fruit, vegetables, and flowers were brought to a table where they added to the beauty of worship. Later they were shared with the congregation.

Margaret Helms has arrived in the Philippines where she has served since 1958. In January, Luella Johnson (Austin's sister) arrived for a month-long visit.

Prayer Pointers: For Austin as he preaches in Advent Christian congregations in the Philippines and helps to develop Christian workers at Oro Bible College. For pastors in the 36 Advent Christian congregations that they will be led by the Lord and model true spiritual values.

George and Beverly Teshera (Philippines): The Tesheras are beginning eight months of ministry in the Philippines. George will serve as acting director of Oro Bible College while Beverly will work with mission finances. Both will teach at the college and be involved with several ministry projects.

Prayer Pointer: Praise God that the Tesheras have answered God's call to service and pray that they will have God's wisdom and direction for their work at the college and with church leaders.

The Shijonawate Christian Institute, the Advent Christian Bible School in Japan, held graduation last summer for Miss Midori Takeuchi. Midori is strongly committed to Christian service and will serve with Food for the Hungry, a Christian organization that provides relief and development ministries for hungry people throughout the world.

Prayer Pointer: Praise God for the Christian commitment of Midori Takeuchi and pray that God will use her to bring the gospel to people she has opportunity to minister to. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

February

1 Praise God for the willingness of **George and Beverly Teshera** to follow God's leading and serve Advent Christian missions in the Philippines during the first eight months of 1993.

2 Pray for **George and Beverly** as they provide leadership at **Oro Bible College**.

3 Pray that visa problems will be resolved for **Margaret Helms** and that she will be able to stay in the Philippines to carry out her new assignment in developing an evangelistic radio broadcast.

4 Praise God for the significant service that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** are providing at Oro Bible College. Pray that their work will strengthen the students they come in contact with.

5 Pray for **David Vignali** as he is home to serve as coordinator for the upcoming Advent Christian General Conference sessions at Aurora University.

6 Civil war has once again flared in **Liberia**. Pray that Christians in that war-ravaged nation will experience God's peace and protection in the midst of chaos.

7 Pray that God will give wisdom and courage to Advent Christian pastors and churches in **Liberia** as they face difficult times.

8 Pray for Advent Christian pastors and churches in **Nigeria** as they communicate the gospel to people in their nation, many of whom are Muslims.

9 Praise God for the Christian commitment of **Midori Takeuchi**, our most recent Shijanowate Bible Institute graduate in Japan. Pray that God will use her life to touch others as she works with Food for the Hungry.

10 Praise God for the opportunities he has given **Ruth Soucier** to communicate God's love for the people she comes in contact with in Japan.

11 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they continue to search for a suitable location for church planting work in West Kobe, Japan.

12 Pray for **Floyd and Musa Powers** as they handle special projects for Advent Christian missions in Japan.

13 Pray that God will give boldness and discernment to Advent Christian pastors and leaders in **Japan** as

they proclaim the good news of Christ's love in their communities.

14 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they provide leadership for the Memphis Advent Christian Church and proclaim the gospel in the inner-city.

15 Pray for **Abel Garcia-Lara** as he leads the effort to plant a Hispanic Advent Christian congregation in San Diego, Calif.

16 Praise God for students sensing God's call to study at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico. Pray that they will be well equipped to reach people for God's kingdom.

17 Pray that God will give strength and wisdom to Advent Christian missionaries planting congregations in the Baja California area of Mexico: **Alberto Gomez, Ever Perez**, and **Arturo Angulo**.

18 Pray that God will give wisdom and direction to the field council team that oversees Advent Christian work in Mexico: **Louia Gransee, Ed Whitford**, and field-superintendent **Carlos Quintero**.

19 Praise God for the Christian commitment of students studying at the **School of Evangelism in India**. Pray that they will sense God's presence as they work to establish new congregations there.

20 Pray that God's strength and discernment will be with each of our three Advent Christian missionaries—**Marion Damon, Barbara White**, and **Beryl Joy Hollis**—as they seek to advance God's kingdom in India.

21 Pray that the many new Christians who have come to Christ through the ministry of Advent Christian congregations in **India** will grow strong in their relationship with him.

22 Pray that Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** will sense God's direction as he maps strategy for the future of Advent Christian missions.

23 Praise God for a renewed interest in missions service among Advent Christian people and pray that God will specifically call **new missionaries** from our ranks during the next five years.

24 Praise God for the ten years of service that Rev. **Warren Rivenbark** has given as Southern Region Superintendent and pray for Warren and his wife Mildred as they prepare to semi-retire in July.

25 Pray for Advent Christian missionaries serving in Malaysia: **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam; James and Mercy Devadasson**; and **Ruth Devairakkam**.

26 Pray that the Lordship of Jesus Christ will be the focus of the upcoming Advent Christian **General Conference** delegate sessions this June in Aurora, Illinois.

27 Pray that, as **Penny Crusade** gets underway next month in many Advent Christian congregations, God will make us sensitive to reaching those lost without Jesus Christ throughout the world.

28 **Praise God** that our salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone and that our sin has been forgiven because of Christ's death for us on the cross.

Right Choice? continued from page 10

ing the right choice?" We are asked if we have questions. Our son asks if he is allowed to smoke. We say our goodbyes and are told to call and make an appointment with his counselor. He remains stiff as we hug him and assure him we will return to visit in a few days. As we turn to leave, he reaches back to hug us, stammering out, "I love you."

Weighed down by our emotions, my husband and I walk in silence to the car. I stand and look at the huge brick building that will be our son's home for the next month and weep. I cry not only for our son but for all the other sons and daughters too. I wonder how many other good Christian homes this is happening to? My heart goes out to all of them.

Where will this road take us, Lord? As we head back to our empty home I wonder again, "Did we make the right choice?" ❑

The author is the wife of an Advent Christian pastor.

Can She Play? continued from page 7

they had taught me an important lesson.

Each day I face language and cultural barriers. I often find myself at the mercy of those around me. Daily I pray for God to show me what to do and say because he understands both languages and understands all who are involved. I never know what situations or opportunities will present themselves to me during the day. I don't have to worry, though, because when I give each day to God, he guides me.

No matter where we live, none of us knows what will happen on a given day. If we keep our eyes open and remain flexible, we may see some simple answers to prayer otherwise unnoticed. I simply wanted to survive one hour with the children. I asked for words to say and good rapport. And I made six new friends. Is there anyone you need to take time to play with today? ❑

Ruth Soucier is an associate Advent Christian missionary serving in Japan.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

God has reconciled us to himself, forgiving all our sins.... We didn't lift a finger to help; we contributed not a dime to the purchase of our salvation. God did it all; he took the initiative, sacrificed himself and mended the broken relationship. We did nothing but get in the way and make things more difficult.

—*Donald McCullough*

Distinction must be made between moral absolutes and cultural relatives. Yesterday's answers are not always appropriate for today's questions. Change and challenge should not be threatening but recognized as part of the process. Leaders must keep calling the organization and its people back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the standards of the Bible while challenging people to grow and innovate within the biblical boundaries. Fulfilling the mission is always more important than perpetuating traditions.

—*Leith Anderson in* Dying for Change

Charles Colson

Democracies are delicate. For their survival, they depend on the weaving together of the responsible leadership of those governing and the confidence of the governed; both cynicism and apathy unravel that fragile fabric.

—*Charles Colson*

We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else....In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other.

—*John Calvin*

During the Second World War, I was proud of my Dutch ancestry when Dutch physicians chose to be shot in the village square rather than take part in Nazi euthanasia experiments. I am amazed and ashamed that today a growing number of patients in Dutch hospitals die by a lethal injection given by their physicians.

—*C. Everett Koop, former U.S. Surgeon General, quoted in* Let's Talk.

I believe it is ridiculous to speak of separating religion from politics. It's never been done and it can't be done. But this society's genius has always been its willingness to permit a vast diversity of believers and nonbelievers to function in the public arena without long allowing any one group to translate its creedal edicts into public law.

—*Hodding Carter III*

America is not God's chosen nation. We are one among many. We may be the joggers in God's park. Other peoples may be flexible gymnasts. Others may be sweating out a fierce game of handball. Taken all together, we make the park exciting. God's foreign policy intends this rich complementary diversity. He has designed a mosaic of all peoples and tribes and kindreds and nations to sparkle around his throne. The kingdom of God is not a castration of cultural uniqueness.

All one in Christ does not mean colorless uniformity.

—*Meriam Adeney in* God's Foreign Policy

Nineteen eighty-nine was a year that shook the world, a year the world witnessed the collapse of communism. We in the media watched in astonishment as the walls of totalitarianism came crashing down. But in the rush to cover cataclysmic events, the story behind the story was overlooked. We trained our cameras on hundreds of thousands of people praying for freedom, votive candles in hand, and yet we missed the transcendent dimension, the explicitly spiritual and religious character, of the story. We looked right at it and could not see it.

—*CNN producer Bud Bultmann commenting on media coverage of events in eastern Europe*

The road to holiness always begins with submission to God...Our highest priority is our relationship with Christ. We commit and recommit ourselves to being willingly responsive in obedience to the call and movement of his Holy Spirit in our lives.

—*Tom Eisenman*

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Marion Damon (March 27)
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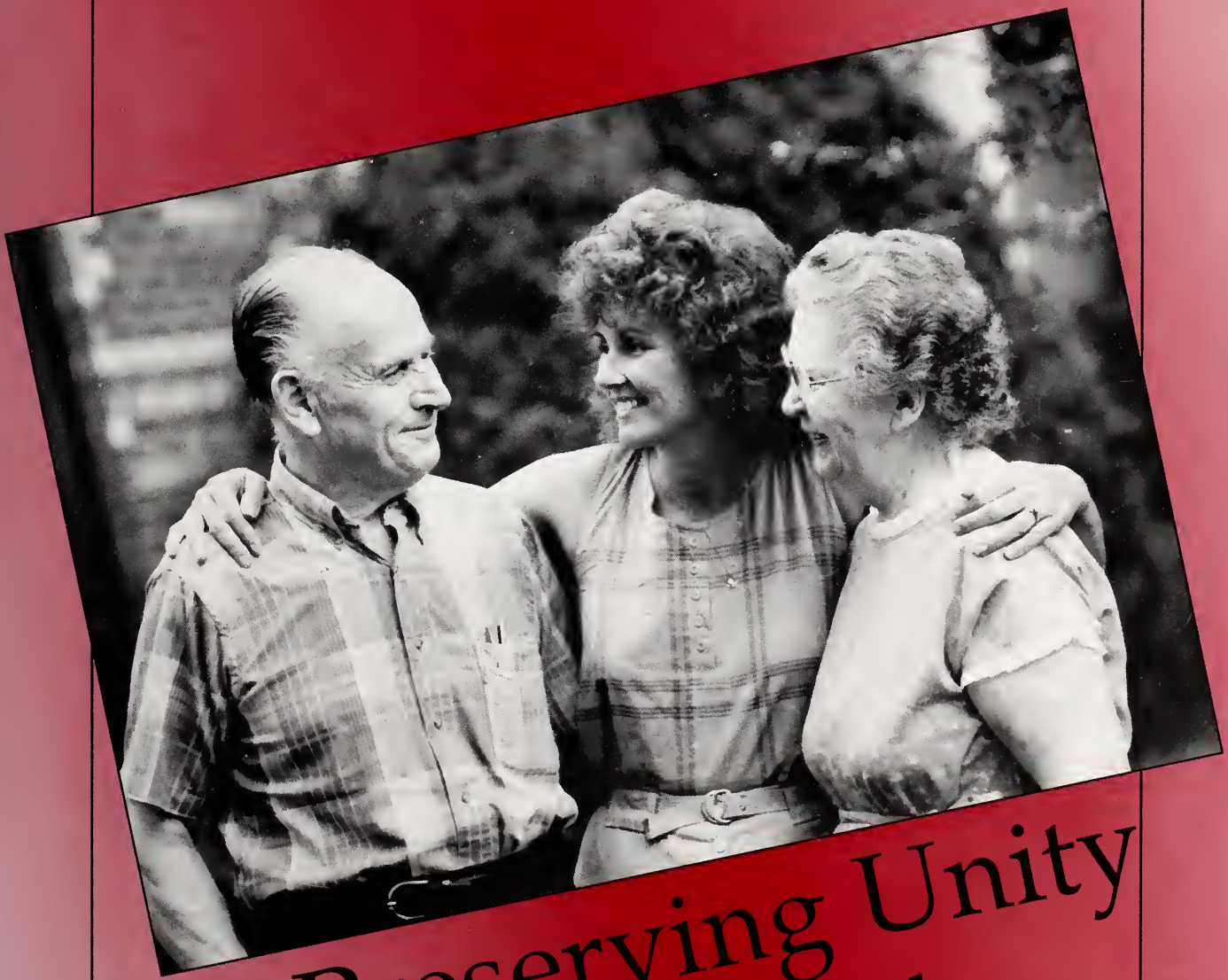

Preserving Unity in the Church

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Church fights destroy lives and congregations. What can we do to practice Jesus' command to love one another within our congregations?

photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Integrity—It's Time to Start Practicing It

THE LAST SEVERAL years have not been good ones for the image of evangelicals in our society. From the time the PTL scandal broke in 1987, we've witnessed a rash of evangelical celebrities, television personalities, and clergy involved in unethical moral and financial scandals. The lack of financial honesty and moral integrity we've seen reflected in these episodes is wrong. Hopefully, Christians are learning that how we do things is just as important in God's eyes as the lofty goals we set our sights on.

But it's time to see our scandals in a larger context. While news organizations and the "tabloid media" (Inside Edition, Phil Donahue, and the like) enjoy the ratings punch that Jim Bakker-like excesses bring, those episodes are much less important to the future of the United States than the influence peddling and ethically suspect activities that happen every day in our local, state, and federal governments. Within evangelical churches, there is still a clear standard of right and wrong. And while we may be shocked by the amount of scandal in recent years, Christians still believe that moral and financial integrity is crucial both in our personal lives and in our churches and agencies.

Chump change

How different from the climate "inside the beltway" as Washington D.C. insiders describe it. Two years ago, it struck me just how different their moral and ethical standards were while watching 20-20. ABC News did an outstanding investigative report describing how several congressmen from both parties, including House Ways-and-Means chairman Dan Rostenkowski, took their families, staff, and lobbyist friends on a five-day junket to Barbados. Their business? A one-day, six-hour meeting. The cost paid by you, the taxpayer? $44,000 dollars. But what shocked me most is this: I never heard any more about it after that! "Chump change!" in the minds of the congressmen. I wouldn't be surprised if each one on that trip got reelected.

Two things strike me as tragic about this sordid episode. First, it's only one small example of what happens every day in the corridors of power. Conflicts of interest abound and dishonesty is common. But even worse, it stands as clear testimony to the lack of moral, ethical, and financial integrity that characterizes the major institutions of our society—government, business, law, education, and so on. The long-term welfare of our nation and its people is seriously threatened. We've become immune to values like simple honesty, not spending money you don't have, and treating others with a sense of respect and dignity. We even glorify our rejection of those values! Sex, greed, racism, dishonesty, and conflict of interest make for great copy and ratings on tabloid television.

Integrity is our business

There's been lots of talk about what priorities Christians in the United States should focus their energies on in the years to come. But in my view one stands out—integrity.

It's time we stop talking about it so much and start living it. Integrity means simple honesty in handling money and commitments, avoiding conflicts of interest. Integrity means placing the long-term welfare of family, community, and society ahead of short-term interests. Integrity involves treating others with dignity and leaves no room for racism or sexism. And integrity means that we don't use unethical or unbiblical ways to accomplish what we consider worthy goals.

I think integrity also means we hold those in government, business, law, and education to the higher standards we demand of our Christian leaders. In a recent issue of The *New Republic* , Jacob Weisberg estimates that over eighty-thou-

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Preserving Unity in the Church

Paul Cedar
Minneapolis, Minn.

ONE OF THE greatest destroyers of the western church today is division, conflict, and unbiblical attitudes Christians display toward one another. It is manifest in outright war in the pews and boardrooms of our congregations.

Church fights, battling egos, personal agendas, and wounded ministries are too common. They make a mockery of the words of Jesus when He prayed, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). Such unity and peace seem to be a rare commodity in the church.

Reputation at stake

From God's point of view, such behavior is as much of a disgrace as the tragic teleministry scandals of the last few years. For when division comes to the local church, the reputation of Christ is compromised in the community. The ministry of the church is brought to a standstill as members battle one another, rather than concentrate on the ministry God has entrusted to them.

With such a display, the world concludes that the church is really no different than the business boardroom. How tragic! This is not a new problem. The apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians was prompted by division and sin within that congregation. They had a conflict which threatened to destroy the church. Paul appealed to them "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

In fact, in a searing indictment against that church, Paul went on to say that they were acting no differently than the world. "For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men" (1 Corinthians 3:3)?

One can only guess how destructive such conflict has been to the reputation of Christ and how much energy has been diverted from the mission Christ gave his church. We live in a time when opportunities for the gospel are literally exploding open all over the world.

It is time for the church to once again become the authentic body of believers, united together by the blood of Jesus for the purpose of reaching our communities and our world. No longer can we allow the enemy to divide and conquer, as he is so skilled at doing. It is time for us to end the scrimmages Satan loves to coach. We must unite under the lordship of Christ to do his work.

What are the keys to this kind of unity of spirit, vision, and purpose in

the local church which will prevent divisions and mobilize us for fruitful ministry? Three characteristics are necessary for the unity of the body.

Conformity through the Holy Spirit

First, healthy congregations have leaders and members who are actively seeking to bring their personal lives into conformity with God's character through the work of the Holy Spirit. They are committed to being the people God has called them to be and to displaying the character traits God wants them to have.

Think for a moment about the words we use to describe much of the conflict that takes place in the local church; discord, jealousy, selfish ambition, dissension, factions, envy, anger, quarreling. We may excuse such character traits as simply the stuff of strong leaders or the natural result of group dynamics.

Scripture, however, is not as charitable in its description of these traits. In fact, Paul labels every one of these character traits "the acts of the sinful nature," and further warns that "those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). These are, in fact, the traits of unregenerate people and the tools of the Evil One that cause division and conflict.

But these are also the character traits which we bring with us when we come to Christ. The Christian life is a lifelong process of allowing God to develop the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We seek to follow Christ in obedience and allow the Holy Spirit to root our sinful tendencies and establish godly character. Thus, Paul exhorts us to seek the fruit of the Spirit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

So foundational are these godly character traits that whenever Paul talks about unity in the body he comes right back to how we treat one another. To the Ephesians, Paul writes, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). In Galatians 5, Paul says to live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit. To drive his point home, he says, "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (Galatians 5:26).

Humble dependence through prayer

The second characteristic of healthy congregations is a humble dependence on God through prayer. It is prayer that forces us to put aside our personal agendas, our petty squabbles, and even our grand plans and designs for the church to seek the mind and will of our Father in humility.

> It is time for the church to once again become the authentic body of believers, united together by the blood of Jesus for the purpose of reaching our communities and our world.

Is it possible there is a direct relationship between the contemporary church's lack of prayer and the conflict it experiences? Dallas Willard pointed out in *Spirit of the Disciplines*, "The 'open secret' of many 'Bible-believing' churches is that a vanishing small percentage of those talking about prayer... are actually doing what they are talking about."

This is the problem addressed by James when he wrote, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3).

We do not need any more personal agendas for the local church. Rather, we desperately need to know what God's agenda for our congregation is, and our window to God's will is through prayer for, as Willard says, "Prayer is like a time exposure to God" (*The Disciplines of a Godly Man*, p. 81). Thus it is that Paul encourages us to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

What are the kinds of issues we ought to be praying about in the local church?

- One another as brothers and sisters in Christ
- Our communities which do not know Christ
- Spiritual growth for those in our congregations
- The defeat of the Evil One in our lives and overcoming temptation
- Spiritual renewal and revival
- Unity and peace within the body
- Ministry direction and strategy
- Our leaders and their ministry of leadership
- The hurting and needy
- The spiritual needs of our world

There is no substitute for prayer—prayer is the key to unleashing God's Spirit in our lives and congregations. Prayer is the key to knowing the mind of God, prayer is the key to bringing our lives and plans into conformity with God's will, prayer is the key to resisting the Evil One and prayer is the key to seeing others come to a saving knowledge of Christ. There is no power, no success, no victory in the Christian life without prayer. Thus,

godly men and women and healthy, vibrant congregations are those who take seriously the call of Paul to pray in the Spirit on all occasions. In God's eyes, great congregations are praying congregations!

Desire to know God's will

The third characteristic of healthy congregations is a deep desire to know God's will for their churches and godly leadership for fulfilling God's mandate to make disciples of all nations. Many congregations do not have a clear idea of God's agenda for their congregation. Others have an agenda, but it is not necessarily God's agenda.

We desperately need that quality called vision which is "the ability to see above and beyond the majority," to look at life through God's eyes and see the mission of our congregations from God's point of view. I am convinced that the foundational passage for this vision is found in the Great Commission where Christ defined the basic call of the church:

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The mission of the church is clear: helping the lost find Jesus and helping those who know him grow. How we do this in the context of each local community will differ.

How desperately we need men and women who see our world as Jesus sees it. Read carefully this account of Christ: "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:35-38).

This is a description of the communities in which we live, seen through the eyes of God: Harassed and helpless people, lost—like sheep without a shepherd. More than this, Jesus calls it a "harvest field" because there are individuals in our communities who are longing for the love and forgiveness of a Savior. And into this harvest field God has placed your congregation, a compassionate people of God to show hurting and helpless people the way to Christ.

Congregations and spiritual leaders of vision see their communities and the world at large through the eyes of Christ. They have developed the compassion of Christ and share the mission of Christ, to bring the lost into the Kingdom and help them grow and mature in Christ. Congregations who define their mission and ministry as Jesus defined it will not go wrong in their priorities. They will be committed to two basic ministries above all else: evangelism and the discipling and training of believers.

A church that changes the world

These are the kind of congregations God can use to change the world: fellowships with deep commitment to godly character in all relationships, where men and women pray and seek God's will, allowing him to work rather than relying on human effort, and where the focus of ministries is set by God himself. Down deep, each of us longs to be part of something exciting, significant, and of eternal value.

Congregations united in these goals will make a significant and deep impact on lives both inside and outside of their churches. It is to this God has called his church. If we are willing, he will enable us to realize his plan for each of our congregations. ❑

Dr. Paul Cedar is president of The Evangelical Free Church of America. Reprinted with permission of the Evangelical Beacon.

Warm Up Your Church

Ways to Help Visitors Feel Welcome

1. Plan for ushers to seat visitors by people the same age or by people with children the same age as the visitors. Specific families might volunteer to be welcoming families for a month.

2. Invite visitors home for lunch. Families could be assigned a Sunday every six months; for that day they could plan expandable meals.

3. Show a visitor where coffee is served after the service. Chat with the visitor and introduce him or her to two other people.

4. Invite a church visitor to attend Sunday school and make a date to meet the person at a specific time and place in the church so you can enter class together. Better yet, make a date for breakfast before Sunday school. Call during the week to confirm your meeting.

5. Make a big deal of the second visit.

6. Invite a newcomer to a church social activity and make sure he or she has directions or a ride. ❑

Supplied by David C. Cook Publishing.

Our Conditional Relationship

Editor's Note: The writer, Thomas, is an inmate at Baker Correctional Institution in Olustee, Florida, where Advent Christian pastor Roy Morrison serves as senior chaplain. In Chaplain Morrison's words, Thomas has "fully recovered his walk with the Lord and has a ministry right here in prison." This is his second Witness *article.*

GOD'S PLAN for his people is based on a conditional relationship from the moment of conception. Nowhere is this better expressed than in 2 Chronicles 7:14:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

All through the Bible, God demands that his people *meet the conditions* he has placed on them before the promises are fulfilled in their lives. That means that as we live in our mortal state, we are to meet the requirements God has placed on the relationship we have with him. Thus, we can see conditional *mortality* as an absolute principle of God. It has been dubbed the "If/Then Principle."

Even in those passages that don't specifically use the actual words *"if"* and *"then,"* the principle remains evident. "If you love me, [then] keep my commandments." This passage of John 14:15 is a prime example. *Then* is implied. God has placed conditions on our relationship with him. If this is evident concerning temporal things, how much more in terms of our immortality.

Neglect creates distortions

A favorite passage from God's Word, John 15:7, is clearly a promise based on condition: *"If* ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, [*then*] ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Some Christians may quote this reference emphasizing only the last portion, "...ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Such neglect of the conditional portions of God's Word creates distortions that form the image of God as a wimpy old man who goes about arbitrarily throwing garlands down from heaven to those who pray selfishly. Such thinking is far from reality. We serve a conditional God. Our mortal relationship with him is based on condition from its inception.

My third-grade teacher, Mrs. Black, opened the class with the pledge to the flag, Bible reading, and prayer. (That was in 1946.) All I remember of it is, "Verily, verily..." as she read the words of Jesus. When I became an adult and a Christian, I sought out where she may have been reading those "verily" portions.

When I found them in the gospel of John, I discovered a *conditional relationship* with God while in this mortal state. There in the third chapter of John the condition is not passive, but stated emphatically. Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It seems the word "except" would be strong enough to make the condition imperative, yet it's even stronger when the first part of Jesus' words are noted. He began his conversation with this *master of Israel* by being direct and emphatic, *"Verily, verily,* I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot...." The King James word "verily" is translated into modern English as "truly" or "of a truth." The importance of this statement is heightened when we understand that it is the Son of God, (who is truth), who states that what he is about to say is *truth.* Jesus is stressing the importance of a conditional relationship with God.

This concept is further fortified in Jesus' words to the Jews in John 8:31,32. *"If* ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The translators of the KJV saw this principle of condition and inserted "then" for clarity.

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MINISTRY

John M. Harper
Panama City, FL

THE SUBJECT I want to focus on can be summarized by one word: ministry. As a pastor, I want to see all Christians become involved in ministry, regardless of whatever ministry God calls them to be involved with. But before we can do that, it's important to understand what ministry is.

Webster's dictionary suggests three definitions. First; "Ministry is the act of ministering." Of course if we don't know exactly what that means, it doesn't help very much. So we move on to the second definition; "Ministry is the office, duty, and function of a minister." Again we ask "what does that mean? What is a minister?"

According to Scripture, and this is the best definition I can find, a minister is one who serves others. His main concern focuses on serving, even if nobody ever notices or acknowledges what he has done. But let me assure you, God notices—everything!

That helps us understand better what ministry is. And it leads to the third definition and let me be honest, I've elaborated on Webster's definition just a bit; "Ministry is a process," to which I add, "whereby people respond to God's call, involve themselves in whatever it is God has laid upon their hearts to do or be involved with, and do it to the best of their ability, as unto God."

The task of every Christian

Think about that for a moment. I believe it's God's will and purpose for our lives (and I believe Paul supports this in Ephesians 4), that every Christian is to be involved in some aspect of ministry. We have all been called to be ministers to each other and to those outside the fellowship of Jesus Christ whom God may lead us to. So read carefully this definition once more. It's crucial for understanding of who we are and what we're supposed to do until Jesus comes.

"Ministry is a process whereby people (you and I) are responding to God's call..." That means we actively, intentionally respond to God's call. It's not enough to simply sense God directing us and then do nothing, we must actively respond to it. Therefore, "Ministry is a process whereby people respond to God's call, involve themselves in whatever God has laid upon their hearts to do, and do it to the best of their ability, as unto God." That's what we need to see in our churches today if we ever want to be a part of what God is doing in our world.

Many have gone to seminars on church growth. Many others have received specific training on this subject. But I've come to realize that you can participate in all the seminars ever offered, and you can train in church growth ministry, but the only way a church will ever grow is when it's members become actively involved. And churches must seek new and improved ways to serve people with the attitude of always being open to

YOU Have a Part!

ways we may not have even thought of yet. When this is done, growth will take place, both spiritually and numerically. And our people will again begin to care about what their churches are doing.

Look at what the apostle Paul says about ministry in Ephesians. "As a prisoner for the Lord (notice he didn't say *of* the Lord, but *for* the Lord), I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling *you have received* " (Ephesians 4:1). Each of us has a place in the overall work of the ministry. How do I know this? Because we have all received a direct call of God. You may not know what that call is yet, but be assured, you have been given one. You have a share in the responsibility of ministry. Paul urges us to live a life worthy of that call. We're to live by the example of Jesus. And since our Lord provides an example of how to serve others (John 13:15), we have been challenged (Luke 10:37) to "go and do likewise."

An attitude of love and humility

Paul then tells us the manner in which we are to minister: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, (if there is one thing I've had to learn since being involved in ministry myself, it's patience), "bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). The Living Bible suggests we make allowances for each others faults in love, "making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Then he describes this new found relationship we have in Christ. "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in (us) all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it" (Ephesians 4:4-7). The word 'grace', as Paul uses it in this passage, refers to the special strengths and abilities which God has given us. God has given each one of us a portion of his strength and ability so that we may have a part in his overall work of ministry. No one is left out.

Paul continues "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

> Ministry is a selfless act of wanting to glorify the Father as we reach out to others in love, especially those who may not yet know him. This is our call.

What's Paul teaching us? I believe it has to do with our responsibility to go out of our own way to help build up a brother or sister in Christ, be it in a spiritual matter or anything else, so that we all reach the unity of faith. In other words, we become as Charles Swindoll puts it, "others-conscious," apart from ourselves. We become servants of one another and to one another's needs. Simply put, we are to be involved in acts of ministry.

It's easy to say, "But I don't know what my ministry is. I'm not an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, or a pastor." Maybe not, but you are child of God, and therefore a part of the body of Christ. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "The body is not made up of just one part, but many." One part is no more important than another. And even though God calls some to a more visible function, their ministry is dependent upon the strength of all within the church body.

Suppose God directs you to pray for the overall work and ministry of the church to which you belong. In my opinion, that is a task and ministry your church cannot live without. Without people committed to prayer there will be a lack of spiritual strength and support that the church desperately needs. Intercessory prayer may be an unseen ministry, but one that's important and vital.

Ministry is a shared task

Paul closes this passage with an important principle for an effective church, "From him (that is Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and is built up, *as each part does it's work*" (Ephesians 4:16). Notice it says, "as each part does its work." Not just a few parts, mind you, but each part. This idea is the real key to church growth, and it's the one that's most often neglected. If we want our churches to grow numerically and spiritually, if we want to see the kingdom of God increased, then we must start working together, sharing the load, and supporting one another. As we seek to serve others, each of us is called to ministry.

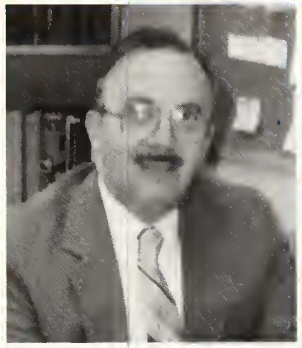
Where changes need to be made, we need to make them. Where attitudes need to be adjusted, we need to adjust them. If we don't we're going to continue as we have for so long, in a spirit of decline. From what I am able to discern from Scripture, this is not the will of God for his people, and for us as Advent Christians.

Ministry is not a selfish act, it is a selfless act of wanting to glorify the Father as we reach out to others in love, especially those who may not yet know him. This is our call. May we take it seriously as we strive to honor him. Find the area of ministry which God has called you to. ❑

John Harper is pastor of the Millville Advent Christian Church in Panama City, Fla.

EVERYBODY NEEDS TO KNOW

-Who JESUS is



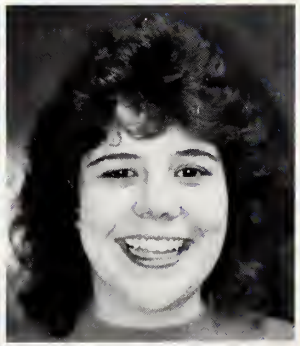
Harold R. Patterson, Director
Charlotte, NC

These people are unlocking doors and spreading God's Word through WORLD MISSIONS!

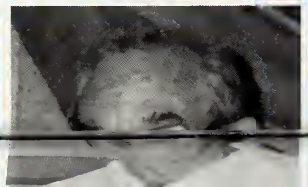
KEY PEOPLE TO MISSIONS

Margaret Helms
Philippines

Steve, Ann, Beth Ann, and Tim Lay
Japan



Ruth Soucier
Japan



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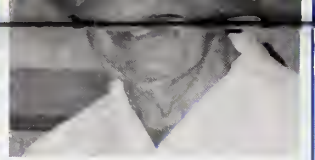
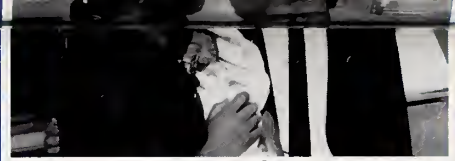
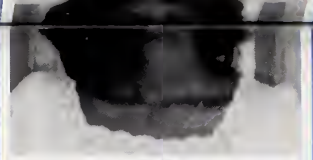

David Vignali
Philippines


Ever and Lupe Perez
Mexico


Ruth Devairakkam
Malaysia

James Devadasson
Malaysia

Barbara White
India

Ernesta Gamez
Mexico

Abel Garcia - Lara
San Diego

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
Memphis

Beryl Joy Hollis
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Alberta Gomez
Mexico

Austin and Darathy Warriner
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Flayd and Musa Pawers
Japan

Marian Daman
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Arturo Angulo
Mexica

Lucas and Beulah Devasahayam
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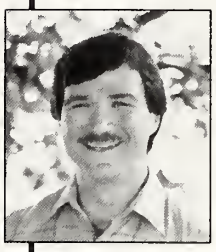
Disciple Maker



Clayton Blackstone

Experience Jesus Again

IF MY MEMORY serves me correctly (something that occurs with diminished frequency thanks to the onset of advancing years) I fell in love for the first time in sixth grade. The girl shall remain nameless to protect the innocent, but I remember it like it was yesterday. Every night, I snuck down to my grandparent's house and called. I waited anxiously at youth rallies and conference meetings to see if she would come with her dad. And I denied vigorously to my teasing brothers and cousins any attraction to the opposite gender.

Even fresher in my mind: my love affair with Hazel. Suffice it to say, in the beginning I wanted it more than she. I could tell you today what she was wearing when I saw her for the first time (tightly clinging to the arm of another man!). I recall the pure, relaxing fun we enjoyed together as friends during a period when the people we were "going with" attended other schools. As I turn back the pages of my mind, I see the moonlit road we walked in Bethel, Vermont, and hear her words of reassurance as we reflected on a nearly disastrous blowup between the guy and gal campers.

I realized then how much I wanted to spend the rest of my life with this gift of gracefulness. I can tell you where and when she told me she loved me. The words had been repeated to me before, but this time they sounded like a symphony. When we were apart during our last year of school, I waited anxiously for her letters to arrive in the morning mail. Drove all night to see her at Thanksgiving break. Carefully saved to fly to Massachusetts to see her in the spring. My stories about the early years of our relationship go on and on. So, I suspect, do yours.

But something happened along the way. I entered holy matrimony planning to always treat her like a princess. Yet good intentions do little to keep the flames of young love alive. Just ask Harold and Rachel, the couple whose story currently appears on a downtown Lewiston, Idaho, billboard. No advertisement marred the simple message. Passers-by took the message at face value:

> **Harold,**
>
> **You wimp of a man. After twenty years, you forgot our anniversary again. Well, I've had enough. And don't forget to pick up your bags off the porch before it rains.**
>
> **—Rachel**

In the press of fulfilling lifelong ambitions and the stress of the routine, my love for my wife began to tarnish. Nothing which threatened to rupture the relationship...just a 'take her for granted attitude' which discolored the edges of our shared life. Thanks to the example of my brother, I realized that I needed to see her again for the first time.

I allow you to peak behind the curtain of my own experience to activate memories of your own. Like me, you've been there. With your spouse. Your work. Your friends. With Jesus.

Love tarnished like unattended silver. We know you're in this thing called Christianity for the long haul. It's good. Comfortable. Still, something's amiss. We can't put our finger on it. No major ache, just a dull feeling of disease. Now we know it well enough to express: the longing to experience Jesus again for the first time.

Trouble with a capital "T"

I guess I'm beginning to show signs of aging since the familiar feels so comfy these days. Lately, words like routine, traditional, conventional, and habitual don't send me spinning into tirades about the status quo. In fact, sometimes, they feel as comfortable as a pair of lounging slippers. Some days, quite frankly, I prefer waddling in the barnyard to soaring over the unfamiliar.

These feelings which quietly slipped into my life as strangers now attempt to pass themselves off as long lost friends. No one decides to be content with the barnyard. It just happens. George MacDonald once observed that we "may get into a worse condition by stupidity and indifference" than by breaking some of the main commandments. Scripture calls it lukewarmness. Other aliases include mediocre, indifferent, apathetic, passable, second rate, and uninspired. While it may be known by a host of designations, its real name is *Trouble* with a capital *"T."*

When we find ourselves preferring waddling to soaring, we need to experience Jesus again for the first time.

For the First Time

Of all the churches in the apostle John's day, the congregation from the city of Laodicaea enjoyed a good waddle the most. First century travelers found the walled city at the junction of two imperial trade routes. Banking, a thriving medical community, and a successful fashion industry formed the heart of a booming economy. When the city was totally destroyed in 60 AD, the locals refused Roman assistance. "Thanks but no thanks. We'll do it ourselves."

Over the years, necessity fashioned folks adept at the art of compromise. Six miles separated the city from its water supply, making it easy prey for an enemy. People chose survival over principle so many times, they mastered the art of accommodation. As a result, this congregation's ministry offered the city neither the calming, healing effects of the nearby hot springs nor the refreshing character of the cold springs of Colosse a few miles southeast.

The water of the city traveled through stone pipes three feet in diameter and hollowed out in the center. Its horrid taste often made visitors vomit after drinking it. To put it bluntly, their disengaged approach to nurturing a friendship with Jesus made him want to throw up. We don't know for certain what the Savior had planned to wake them from apathetic slumber, but what ever it was, it wasn't good.

The Laodicaeans of history shared much in common with the Yuppies of today. Rich. In need of nothing. Healthy. Sporting the latest designer creations. They got what they wanted through their own efforts.

Jesus exposed their fatal flaw, the one shared by all whose love resembles unattended silver. *You say, "I'm rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve, so you can see"* (Revelation 3:17,18).

There's more to life than having it all. More at stake than the surface stuff we think about most of the time. The consequences of losing one's life far far outweighs who wins the Super Bowl.

Let's eat

I suppose some of us suspect Jesus gets his kicks from raining on our parties. Quite the opposite. In the words of Tony Campolo, "The Kingdom of God is a party!" He loves with all the freshness of first love even when we don't. He even warns that he might have to take drastic measures just to bring us to our senses.

Good friends ate together in oriental homes, something Jesus expressed a keen interest in doing with his indifferent friends in Laodicaea. It was a practice long neglected. They possessed too much self-assurance. Too pronounced a spirit of independence. Too great an absorption in their quest for the best to take time to eat with the Pioneer of their Faith.

Looking back, it's easy to detect the need to experience Jesus again for the first time. Even the way to do it appears elementary: just a bit of relaxed time when we drop the defenses.

Same song, second verse

Down the road a piece, another congregation struggled with the need to experience Jesus again for the first time. The congregation in Ephesus deserved a medal. When the Gospel exploded in their city, the transformation forced idol makers to join the ranks of the unemployed. As many as 50,000 responded to the invitation to become followers of the Way. Over the years, they worked hard. Listened critically. Remained faithful through the hard times.

But somewhere along the way, their love began to display hints of unattended silver. Great devotion characterized their early years in the faith. Paul had once asked God to root and establish them in love. But overwork played a role in killing their spiritual passion.

I suppose I'm reading a bit between the lines. But, to me, it appears as though they were so intent on carrying out Paul's wish to "guard the flock" they became mechanical, cold, insensitive. In the slightly altered and recent words of a friend to this one bitten by the same bug, "Sometimes, we just try too hard!"

In the case of indifference due to self-sufficiency, Jesus suggested he may take drastic measures to help us experience him again for the first time. In the case of indifference due to a loss of focus, he prescribes a different remedy. *Remember your first love.*

Remembering: the first step to recovery. The verb tense: continuing. Keep on.

Old Testament worship established the pattern with feasts and symbols. Their purpose: to help people recall God's goodness.

The second step: repent. We're familiar with the word, but not much in love with the concept. It includes sorrow about previous action rather than offering a host of well reasoned justifications, a change of mind about the attitudes which have resulted in wrong choices, and decisive action in a new direction.

In either case, Jesus promises the same result. A fresh start. Renewal. The glistening glean of freshly polished silver.

So what do you say? Remember. Repent. Take time for a leisurely meal with the One who stands at the door and knocks. Experience Jesus again for the first time. ❑

A Place of Intimacy

Fern Smith
Lewiston, Idaho

CHUCK SWINDOLL tells an engaging story that touches me every time I read it. It focuses on the intimacy of our relationship with Jesus. Permit me to tell it to you. A young man was ready to graduate from high school and his father had promised him a car for that occasion. He had spent many weekends with his dad talking about and test driving cars. The father thought about maintenance and mileage. The son focused on speed and design. But finally they agreed on a beauty and the son thought about it everyday. Graduation would soon arrive and the expectation was almost more than he could bear. Soon he would have wheels and the freedom that came with them.

Graduation Day arrived and as the family gathered in the living room after the ceremony, the father finally felt it was the appropriate time to give the gift. He handed his son a small box. Grinning from ear to ear, the boy opened it carefully so the expected keys would not fall. To his surprise, there were not keys, only a black Bible. Without even removing the book from the box, he opened the cover and it was inscribed, "Love, Dad."

With eyes aflame, the boy threw the book down, screamed, "How dare you!" at the top of his lungs, and stormed out the door. The son vowed that he would never enter that home again as long as his father lived. And he kept his vow.

Several years later, his father died and he returned home. His mother asked him to go through his father's things. Desk drawers, papers, boxes, all reminders of a father who had given him something in a different way than he expected.

There it was. In the midst of his father's things, he discovered once again the black Bible. He reluctantly took it out of the box and as he did, a folded paper fell to the floor. He picked it up slowly, opened it, and stopped. His shoulders slumped. It was the cashier's check covering the cost of the car.

With anguished tears streaming down his face, questions filled the son's mind, "Had I been with my dad so long and not truly known him? Was I so caught up with myself that I forgot his deep love for me and that he would never let me down? Had I not known that his word was good?" Then, daring to look a little deeper into his heart, the awful truth struck him full force: He didn't trust his father! Everything he had been promised had been there all along.

Intimacy with God: Our foundation

Women, we have the privilege and responsibility of being where Jesus wants us in our local church and our community. In the words of Vicki Kraft, "A church without a vital ministry to women is like a house without a mother." Who we are as a group and the quality of our ministry to women depends on who we are as individuals.

If we're going to effectively build for God's kingdom and touch lives for Jesus Christ, our lives must be built on a firm foundation. What is that foundation? I think it's not only knowing about Jesus in our heads but experiencing who Jesus is in our hearts and discovering his ways for our life.

The Lord has been teaching me some things about knowing Jesus as the cornerstone of my life during these past few months. I want to share with you some of what he's been teaching me about knowing him in a more intimate way.

Where is my focus?

Jesus spoke these words to Philip,

"Don't you know me Philip, even after I have been with you such a long time?" (John 14:9). His question to his disciple prompted some of the same questions the son asked at the end of Chuck Swindoll's story. Like the son, was I more focused on the gift more than the relationship? In my experiences of life, don't I often forget that my heavenly Father would never let me down?

My attitudes and actions spoke silently that I didn't truly trust God. How long had I been with him? How well did I know him? Sobering questions. But reflecting on my past, I knew I wanted more than anything to know Jesus in a more personal way.

Think about these words from Oswald Chambers, "We have to probe straight down as deeply as God has probed us, to be keen in sensing the Scriptures which bring the truth straight home and to apply them fearlessly." I sense that I had been probed and I'm not so sure I approached this one as fearlessly as I did humbly.

But as I struggled with those tough questions about my relationship with God, he directed me to a thrilling passage of Scripture in my devotions. The apostle Peter writes, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness." What a powerful truth. But Peter doesn't stop there. "His divine power has given is everything we need for life and godliness *through the knowledge of him* who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Peter 1:3).

That you may know him better

The Scriptures speak often about our need to know Jesus not only in our heads but with our hearts. Jesus declared in Matthew's gospel, "Learn from me" (Matthew 11:29). In John, the Master claims, "I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep *know* me" (John 10:14). The apostle Paul writes, "I want to *know* Christ and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10). He prays that God will give wisdom to the believers at Ephesus, so "that you may *know* him better" (Ephesians 1:17). John teaches that "the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may *know* him who is true" (1 John 5:20).

Jesus even defines eternal life in terms of knowing him. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Later in this same chapter, Jesus promises to make himself known to his followers so that he may live in us.

I want my life to reflect the real Jesus Christ and the best way to make that happen is simply by knowing him better and making my relationship with him a priority. I want a greater understanding of how he would respond to the situations and circumstances I face in life.

My name is on a volunteer list for meeting transportation needs for the homeless in Lewiston. One evening I was called and asked the next day to take a young Indian couple to their dentist about twenty miles away. Of course, I was willing to do that but I was also leaving to spend the night with a dying cancer patient. I came home after a twelve-hour shift and went to bed. I set the alarm to go off after three hours. Then I drank a cup of hot coffee to help wake up and took off to provide the transportation.

I want my life to reflect the real Jesus Christ and the best way to make that happen is simply by knowing him better and making my relationship with him a priority.

When I arrived at the shelter, I found out that although the couple was well-informed and aware of the appointment, they had gone shopping according to one of the homeless women at the YWCA. I got back into my car and all the way home, I was talking to myself. What do you suppose I was thinking? "How ungrateful. Do they have any idea what someone has been willing to go through to offer help? These people are irresponsible and that's why they're homeless."

Those thoughts raced through my mind as I drove back up the hill. And as I vented my frustrations through my thoughts, I began to wonder, "What would Jesus have done in this set of circumstances? What would his attitude have been?" I knew it would be different from mine.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law came to mind. They too had a question about what to do with the irresponsible, adulterous woman. They knew what the Law said. "Stone her," they declared.

But when they asked Jesus, "What do you say?" You know the wisdom of his answer. I had the same question, "Jesus, what do you say? What about homeless people?" I called Nan at the YWCA, told her about my frustration, and asked her to help me sort it out. The most helpful thing she said was that they make every effort to filter out legitimate needs from those who simply want to "use" the service. But even so, some "users" get through.

This experience only increased my desire to know what Jesus would do in this complex world we live in today. How we need his wisdom and how we need to know him better. How does that happen? How do I do that?

Be still and know

The answer is not one I wanted to hear that day. I was tired. And like millions of Americans, I want things to happen instantly. But getting to know someone takes time. It's a process that means spending time with that person.

But God promises to help us know him better through the power of his Holy Spirit living in our hearts. In

continued on page 17

Missions Watch

David McCarthy

Ruth Soucier completes first year of mission service

Ruth Soucier (Japan): Ruth celebrated the first anniversary of her arrival in mid-October. She teaches English language classes with an enrollment of 43 and weekly attendance of 25-30 students. Visitors comment on the happy atmosphere and laughter that mark class sessions.

During the Christmas Season, Ruth joined in a variety of activities, including special music programs involving vocal and instrumental groups from many churches.

Prayer pointers: That those attending the English classes may develop an increasing interest in God's Word and may be drawn into further contact with Christians. That Ruth may be able to show the love of Christ through words and actions.

Advent Christian missionaries in the Philippines (left to right): Austin Warriner, Dorothy Warriner, Margaret Helms, David Vignali.

Floyd and Musa Powers (Japan): Although officially retired, Floyd and Musa remain involved in God's work. Musa sets aside time for teaching English, while Floyd is involved with weddings in hotel chapels. During the ceremony, he tells the meaning of the cross, and some couples say later that they never heard it explained before or didn't understand its meaning. Such experiences are an encouragement and make the work rewarding.

Prayer pointers: The Powers have opportunities to encourage younger workers on the field and to explain Japanese customs or interpret for the missionaries from America. Pray that they may continue to be a blessing to those who serve with them.

Beryl Joy Hollis (India): Beryl Joy reports that our India churches are maintaining a schedule similar to our busy North American congregations. Pastors' retreats, lay ministry seminars, and large prayer events have taken place recently.

Beryl Joy has taught two weeks each month in the School of Evangelism at Kodai, and spoken at many churches on Sundays. She also led a weekly women's Bible study at the Indian Institute of Technology.

Prayer pointers: The Supervisory Committee working with the India Advent Christian Conference. Several workers in Conference churches have serious health problems; a number of the churches require major plant renovations or unexpected major repairs. Pray that God's people will successfully overcome Satan's blows.

Steven and Ann Lay (Japan): Steve reports an important answer to prayer, the location and purchase of property for a new mission office in West Kobe, Japan. Construction will soon begin on a facility that will serve as permanent residence for the Lay family, headquarters for the Japan Advent Christian mission, and a base of operations for planting a new Advent Christian congregation in West Kobe.

Prayer Pointers: Praise God for answered prayer in securing the West Kobe property. Pray that God will guide Steve and Ann as they communicate God's love to the people they come in contact with. Pray that the Japanese people they meet will be receptive to the gospel. ❑

Intimacy continued from page 15

essence God has placed a part of himself within my heart enabling me to know him. Look at how the Scriptures describe it. Jesus declares, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow within him" (John 7:38-39). I can know his ways by allowing his Word to transform my way of thinking.

Paul writes in Romans 12, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's way is—his good, pleasing, and perfect way" (Romans 12:1-2). How familiar, but how easily forgotten! The closer I draw to God, the more I am changed. Reading the Scriptures is much like the letters I receive from my children. I can't wait to read them. Then, just in case I missed something, I pick those letters up the next day and read them again. I pray for that same kind of anticipation for what the Scriptures hold for me.

I have the power of prayer. The Scriptures teach me to *listen* to God and to communicate with him. Prayer is for the spiritual life what breathing is to physical life. We learn to walk by walking and in the same way, we learn to pray by praying.

God has given us three tools—his spirit, the Scriptures, and prayer. Only if I use them until they feel like a well worn glove will I know his ways. I continue to find that the more I use these three ways to deepen my relationship with him—the more spiritual food I crave.

A new heart and mind

Paul writes in Ephesians that I must become "new in the attitude of my mind" (Ephesians 4:23). What does Jesus say about how I treat my husband, members of my family, or how I relate to others in my local church? What does he say about responding to verbal attack, social issues, finances? The list goes on, and I want my desire to know him to focus on all these areas of life.

Above all else, I must know his power, his goodness, his promises, and his person for I've learned that it's his commitment to me that really matters. That commitment calls me to respond. I don't want to be like the son who didn't trust his father. God has given me his best through Jesus Christ and I want to know him better. And I pray that the desire to know him will be the focus of Advent Christian women everywhere. ❑

Fern Smith communicated these ideas to those attending the Western Advent Christian Association meetings last fall. She is the wife of Western Region superintendent W. James Smith and has been active in women's ministry groups for over thirty years. Fern and Jim make their home in Lewiston, Idaho.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
ABIDE
SEEK
KNOW

April

1 Pray for **Frank Jewett** and others as they seek God's will concerning a projected short-term mission trip to Nigeria.

2 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Nigeria** will have boldness and courage as they proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3 Pray for soldiers and relief workers in **Somalia** as they bring needed relief supplies to people who are hungry and in need.

4 Pray that God will provide new opportunities for preaching the gospel in **Somalia**, a country that is officially Islamic.

5 Praise God for the courage of Advent Christian pastors and people in the war-torn nation of **Liberia**.

6 Pray that God will bring peace to **Liberia** and that Liberians will respond to the good news of Christ's love for them.

7 Praise God for the ministry that **George and Beverly Teshera** are having in the Philippines during their eight-month short-term assignment.

8 Pray that as **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** work with college students at Oro Bible College, their ministry will continue to be effective in equipping these future Christian leaders.

9 Pray for **Margaret Helms** as she develops some innovative projects for Advent Christian missions in the areas of radio and correspondence ministries.

10 Pray for **David Vignali** as he coordinates the planning for the upcoming General Conference meetings this June in Aurora, Illinois.

11 Pray that Advent Christians coming to **General Conference** from across the United States and Canada will be sensitive to God's leading for the work of his church.

12 Praise God that property for a new mission office in **West Kobe, Japan** has been found.

13 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they use the new Kobe site as the base for establishing a new Advent Christian congregation in this community.

14 Praise God for the contacts that **Ruth Soucier** is making for the cause of the gospel through the English classes she teaches.

15 Pray for **Floyd and Musa Powers** as they use a variety of ways to introduce the Japanese people they come into contact with to the gospel.

16 Pray that God will give Advent Christians in **Malaysia** courage, wisdom, and boldness as they proclaim the gospel in this officially Islamic nation.

17 Pray that Advent Christian missionaries **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam, James and Mercy Devadasson**, and **Ruth Devairakkam** will sense God's grace and presence as they serve him today.

18 Pray for **Beryl Joy Hollis** as she leads a weekly women's Bible study at the Indian Institute of Technology.

19 Pray for **Marion Damon** as she works with the India Advent Christian Conference on a variety of administrative details.

20 Pray for **Barbara White** as she works with pastors and students in India.

21 **India** is a nation torn by violence between Hindus and Muslims. Pray that Christians in that nation can be a force for peace, reconciliation, and hope.

22 Pray for **Abel Garcia-Lara** as he works to establish a Hispanic Advent Christian congregation in San Diego.

23 Praise God for the commitment that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** have to proclaim the gospel through word and deed in the inner city of Memphis.

24 Pray for students of **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico as they prepare for graduation. Ask God to guide them into places of ministry and service where they will be effective for God's kingdom.

25 Advent Christian missionaries in Mexico—**Alberto Gomez, Ernesto Gamez, Arturo Angulo**, and **Ever Perez**—are involved in church planting. Pray that God will lead them to people responsive to the message of the Christian faith.

26 Pray for members of the Mexico field council—**Ed Whitford, Louia Gransee**, and field superintendent **Carlos Quintero**—as they provide oversight for Advent Christian work in Mexico.

27 Pray that God will give guidance and direction to Mission Director **Harold Patterson** as he seeks wisdom and direction for the future of Advent Christian Missions.

28 Pray for **Advent Christian pastors** across the United States and Canada as they carry out their many ministry responsibilities today.

29 Pray for Regional Superintendents: **Richard Thurston, W. James Smith, Warren Rivenbark, Clinton Taber**, and **Hal Vannoy**.

30 Pray for those serving at the denominational offices: **David Ross, Bob Cole, Millie Griswold, Harold Patterson, Brent Carpenter**, and **Bob Mayer**.

Integrity from page 3

sand lobbyists work regularly in the nation's capital. We've allowed these folks to create a climate where short-term greed and special interest now define how we do business.

Ross Perot struck a nerve last year when he blamed "all these fellows with thousand-dollar suits and alligator shoes" for creating the conditions that threaten the long-term well-being of our society. He's on the right track. But we're to blame as well and things in the United States will only continue to get worse until we start practicing integrity in our personal lives and communicate to our leaders our concern about simple basic values—honesty, commitment, and respect for the worth of people. ❑

Relationship from page 7

From these passages we can do a chain reference that will take us into all the conditional promises of God. When we arrive at Galatians 3:29, "And *if* ye be Christ's, *then* are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise," we see both the promise of mortality's relationship with God, and our immortal relationship, based on condition.

Sin's promise

The "negative" promises, (the ones we tend to slough off), are also conditional. For example, "For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:20,21 KJV). Although the word *then* is replaced by the word "for" at the beginning of verse 21, the principle is the same.

When it comes to sin and the conditional promises to live a righteous life, Christians are compromising with our cultural standards more each day. Yet, God has placed upon us the principle of conditional mortality.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, *if* we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby [then] know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:3-6 KJV). ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

"He must increase, I must decrease. That's it, isn't it? That is the issue facing all of us in the church today. Do we really want Jesus to increase? Or just our attendance? Are we more concerned about people knowing who we are or knowing who Jesus is?

—*Mike Yaconelli in* The Door

Let us put it as clearly as possible. There would be no abortion debate, there would be no pro-life or pro-choice movement, were it not for the fact that there are two parties immediately and inescapably involved in the abortion decision, the mother and the child. In the decision to abort, the life of the one party may , in some rare instances, be at stake. The life of the other is always forfeited. Remove the question of the other life, and abortion is a relatively safe procedure for getting rid of an unwanted growth. The entire abortion controversy is occasioned by the perceived fact of the other life.

—*Richard John Neuhaus in* First Things

The most important word next to the name of Jesus, the word to shelter us in storms of doubt and hold us amidst the rising river of death, the word which we should hear, really hear, and let sink deeply into our lives, is this: grace.

—*Donald McCullough*

The notion that we are simply disembodied intellects entitled to manipulate God's creation for our amusement or exploitation is a spiritual crisis. We are interwoven with the entirety of creation, given a special role and dominion but required to exercise stewardship. We have chosen to ignore those spiritual obligations.

—*Vice-president Albert Gore Jr. in* World Vision

My simple proposition is this: environmental change often benefits the poor. Dams, for example, produce power. They store water for agriculture. They provide for economic development. Environmental changes that provide food, jobs, materials for homes, a need for factories, and general economic activity can be good for the poor. Remember, the poor are people who might soon starve without help. If an environmental change we make today creates a health hazard, or a threat of hazard, 25 or 50 or 100 years from now, that has to be a very small concern to people starving today.

—*Donald Hodel, former U.S. Interior Secretary*

Biblically, Christians have the right to expect both evangelism and social action, not just from the relief agencies but also from the mission agencies. In our relief work, we must not stiff-arm the gospel like it's a wet dog in our living room. Verbal, and yes, even confrontational evangelism must accompany our good deeds. At the same time, our missionary evangelism cannot coldly ignore the critical physical and emotional needs of the people we try to reach. Rescue and rehabilitation must accompany our soul-winning.

—*James Reapsome in* Pulse

Idealism in the foreign policy of a democracy makes special demands of its leaders. They must clearly define, honestly explain, eloquently persuade. They must seem not only strategically, but also ethically, authoritative.

—*Editorial in* The New Republic, *12/28/92*

If worship does not change us, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change. Resentments cannot be held with the same tenacity when we enter His gracious light.

—*Richard Foster*

Want to see a miracle? Plant a word of love heart-deep in a person's life. Nurture it with a smile and a prayer, and watch what happens. An employee gets a compliment. A wife receives a bouquet of flowers. A cake is baked and carried next door. A widow is hugged. A gas-station attendant is honored. A preacher is praised. Sowing seeds of peace is like sowing beans. You don't know why it works; you just know it does. Seeds are planted, and topsoils of hurt are shoved away.

—*Max Lucado in* The Applause of Heaven

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Advent Christian
WITNESS

April 1993

The Call to Communicate

An interview with
Steve and Ann Lay

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Volume 41, Number 3

Advent Christian WITNESS

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Does God Love Homosexual People?

MY STOMACH TURNED as I read the initial report. Three Marines walked into a Wilmington, North Carolina, bar and upon discovering it was a place where homosexuals congregated, dragged 28-year-old Crae Pridgen outside and beat him severely. Mr. Pridgen suffered cuts and bruises on his head, a black eye, and injuries to an ear and a leg.

Like most evangelicals, I believe the Scriptures clearly teach that homosexual practice is not God's standard for human relationships. And I have serious problems with the political agenda of extreme gay-rights organizations like ACT-UP or Queer Nation.

But I cannot find anything in the Bible or anywhere else to justify this kind of random hate-filled violence. Sadly, God's people have too often looked the other way when violent acts like this take place—especially when it happens to people whose actions or lifestyle we don't approve of.

God loves people

What happened to Mr. Pridgen serves to highlight the dilemma that many evangelicals wrestle with today. We want to affirm what we believe the Scriptures teach about homosexual practice. At the same time, we recognize that God affirms the value and worth of every person no matter who they are. We're alarmed when we see homosexual practice being taught merely as an "alternative lifestyle" in many public schools. But we recognize that all citizens in our country are granted the rights and privileges of citizenship. How do we navigate through these difficult currents? Let me suggest three ideas.

First, God loves people and that love applies to homosexuals as well as anyone else. Homosexual practice is no greater sin than adultery, greed, idolatry, and the others that Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In fact, the apostle, after listing those sins says, "And that is what some of you were." God's love reached out to all kinds of people including homosexuals. And homosexuals who responded to the gospel were part of the Corinthian church. So when we speak the truth about homosexual practice, it must be done not with hatred but with love. Yes, homosexual practice is sinful but God loves homosexuals. He wants them, like everyone else, to hear the good news of the gospel message.

But it's not enough to stop there. Evangelicals have always felt that experiencing God's love, acceptance, and forgiveness for our sin starts people on a path toward changed, Christlike lives. But change is a process, something that takes time. Seriously following Christ takes a lifetime of learning. And some struggles, like alcoholism, take months or even years of struggle to deal with. Then why do we expect instantaneous change from homosexuals? Are we such experts in the dynamics of human sexuality that we simply expect homosexuals to suddenly become heterosexuals when they receive Christ? In some cases, that happens. In many cases, it doesn't. Change is a process. Christian growth takes time. That's true for all of us—even Christians who come from a background of homosexuality.

There's one more thing that Christians can do. We can speak out against the type of brutal beating that Crae Pridgen suffered. Tragically, it hap-

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Raymond Beecroft: 1907-1993

AS WE GO TO PRESS, we've learned that former *Advent Christian Witness* editor Raymond Beecroft fell asleep in Christ on February 26, 1993. Rev. Beecroft served as publications manager and editor for over twelve years. Under his leadership, the *Witness* was honored with two awards in 1963 by the Evangelical Press Association for most improved format and denominational publication of the year.

A native of Philadelphia, Rev. Beecroft's education included degrees in both Bible and accounting. He was ordained to the Advent Christian ministry in the early 1950s and was a passionate voice for the integrity of the gospel and the authority of the Holy Scriptures. After completing his service with Advent Christian

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An Interview with Steve and Ann Lay

Steve and Ann, when did you first sense God leading you into mission service?

Steve: Several years ago we were considering a short-term missions experience overseas. At that time we talked with Moses Crouse, a professor at Aurora University and chairman of the Missions Committee for the Advent Christian Church. He suggested that we consider Japan.

We wanted to be in a situation where we could go as a family. We have two children and we wanted to go somewhere where the whole family could live together. So I took a one-year leave from my teaching position at Aurora University during the 1986-87 school year and we went to Japan. We felt that one year was definitely the Lord's leading. And after that year was over, we came back to Aurora and settled back into life there feeling like our one year in Japan was the extent of God's call.

But as time passed we began to feel that his purposes for us in Japan were much larger than that one year of time we spent there. We began to consider going back as career missionaries. That was a process that took about a year-and-a-half as it wasn't an easy decision to make. We were looking not only at a career change for me but at leaving our community and our friends and family.

Ann: When I first felt the Lord leading us to go, I questioned whether or not he knew what was best for our lives. I wanted to try to convince him that it wasn't what was best for our children, for our parents. We lived across the street from Steve's parents and I had always felt that we would be there for them as long as they lived. So I had a lot of questions and I put those before the Lord. I asked him, "How can it be so good for us to be pulled away from our family and friends?"

But I had little peace. I struggled for about six months until I stopped asking questions and admitted, "Lord, I really think you know what's best for us and I'll follow you even though I don't fully understand why you're asking us to go at this time." Then I had peace. And I sensed that he understood my concerns and that he would take care of those things that were close to my heart—my children, our parents. He gave me the courage to go ahead and follow him.

Did one of you sense the call before the other?

Steve: I wouldn't say that I sensed the call earlier but I felt an openness to consider it earlier. I found myself sitting in my office at Aurora looking at a math book with my mind on Japan, thinking not only about my experience there but also the people. I wanted to encourage the Japanese people I knew who had just become Christians. And Japanese people I knew who hadn't become Christians—I was concerned about them and wondered

what I could do to help them come to know the Lord. So I began to talk about what I missed about Japan. At the same time, Ann was glad to be back in the United States. So there was a sense of tension—struggle at least.

Ann: We're used to praying together daily and we believe that God brought us together as a couple and wants us to do things as a couple. So when Steve started making comments about what he missed about Japan, my first reaction was, "I don't want to even think about that." But because I believe the Lord wants to lead us as a couple, I wanted to be open to that. And the more open I was to considering that returning to Japan might be what God wanted us to do, the more I felt threatened because of the issues I mentioned earlier.

I understood that while I don't always know what's best for us, God does. But there was a real struggle. It took six months for me to be willing to admit, "God, you know what's best and I don't need for you to explain it to me and answer all my questions. I'll go forward and follow you." And his peace was there.

Steve: Ann's experience was a real confirmation for me that the Lord wanted us to go back to Japan. I saw the change in Ann's attitude come about not because of my harping or prodding but by the Lord's work in her heart. So our sense of calling to go to Japan actually came at the same time out of that struggle with considering whether or not this was God's will for us.

Ann: He didn't mention it all of the time. All that he had to say was, "I sort of miss Japan," and I thought "Oh-oh." Steve was able to see returning there as a possibility before I did but he didn't know what I was struggling with because it had to be between me and the Lord.

Steve: I did not want to push her into going. And I didn't want her going because of me. It had to be something that Ann felt called of God to do just as much as I did. I had to allow the Lord to work both in her heart and in mine. . .

Ann: And if I would have sensed from my time of struggle that the Lord didn't want us to go, I wouldn't have gone.

It sounds like God's spirit worked with each of you individually and at the right time brought you together to affirm his call.

Ann: In a nutshell, that's what happened.

You've been in Japan a little over two years. What's the biggest cultural adjustment you've faced?

Ann: The language.

Steve: The difficulty in communicating with the Japanese people as well as the difficulty in learning Japanese. We've been in language school full-time during these past two years and that's occupied much of our time and energy. It's a difficult language to learn. Even the Japanese themselves know it's difficult to learn. It's difficult for them as well. It will take us at least four to five more years to feel comfortable in speaking Japanese. It's frustrating for us to work as hard as we've worked at learning the language and still be at such an elementary level.

Ann: We have heart-level things we want to share with the Japanese people we come in contact with. But sharing heart-level things with our elementary understanding of Japanese is very difficult. We can write our thoughts out in Japanese but to spontaneously share our thoughts is still difficult.

> It took six months for me to be willing to admit, "God, you know what's best and I don't need for you to explain it to me and answer all my questions. I'll go forward and follow you."

Japanese is much different from the romance languages that most Americans study during their school years. Many missionaries after two years of studying French, German, or Spanish are able to communicate well and get right into their work. Missionaries in Japan are not able to do that because it's much more difficult to learn Japanese. It takes five to six years of study before you begin to feel comfortable with Japanese.

Steve: You want to be doing more than you can.

Ann: The word order in Japanese is reversed from English. You have to reverse your word order to think in Japanese which for American minds is very difficult.

Steve: And the Japanese leave out a lot when they're talking with each other. A lot is unsaid. So it isn't what you say, but it's learning how to not say something. In other words, you learn how to communicate without coming out and saying something. Americans tend to be direct in their communication while the Japanese are much more indirect. So it's not only a matter of learning the right grammar and vocabulary. It's learning to express it in the same way that Japanese people do.

Steve, you have a Ph.D. in Mathematics from UCLA and taught math at Aurora University for many years. Since you've been in Japan, have you had opportunity to use your training in this field?

Steve: Yes and no. No in the sense that I'm not currently teaching mathematics in a university setting. That may come later once I learn the Japanese language. Then I can learn the Japanese mathematical language and

that could open some opportunities to teach.

But in another sense, the answer is yes. Japanese people have a high regard for education. So the fact that I have a doctorate has opened some doors for relating to people that would not have been there. We met a couple where the husband has a Ph.D. in biochemistry. When he first discovered that we were missionaries, he was quick to tell us that he didn't believe in anything because he was a scientist. There was a relational distance there. But when he saw on my card that I have a Ph.D. in mathematics, his response was, "Oh, we have something in common. You're a scientist, too." And out of that has come a good friendship. He has been helpful to us and I can sense that he is open to the gospel by his questions. I don't push it on him but it's not uncommon for him to ask me a question. You see, my existence is an enigma to him because I'm a man of faith and belief in God who comes from a scientific background. He wonders, "How can that be?" So in that sense, my education has allowed me to communicate effectively with this person and with others who respect educational achievement.

One of the things we hear in this country is that the Japanese people are very difficult to reach with the gospel. What are some of the ways you've used to attempt to communicate the gospel to the people you come in contact with?

Ann: We're finding that the conversational English classes we teach are a good way to do that. We never simply teach English. In our classes, we use the Bible and we share our testimonies with our students.

In language school, I've had to write eighteen speeches and present them during chapel at the school. So I've shared my speeches with my neighbors. I've given them a copy in Japanese and through those, they get to know more about me and my family.

Steve: In her talks, Ann relates about herself and how the Lord is helping her deal with issues that are coming up in her life. And her stress is on practical day-to-day things we face in working out our Christian faith. We don't have the language skills to communicate these things verbally in a conversation. But we can write out the talks, have the teachers correct them, and then use them in our contacts with people.

Ann: And we try to live as a Christian family in their midst—doing things together as a family. That has its testimony as well.

Steve: As our language skills increase, we'll be able to communicate more effectively with words why we live the way we do. Much of what we're doing now is simply building relationships with the people that God brings us in contact with.

> Pray that we'll have the ability to simply trust God even when our expectations and goals don't always come to pass. . .

Ann: One woman came up to us on the train and asked, "May I speak English with you?" That was great. When we rode the train to language school, we had the opportunity to speak with her in English almost every day. She was 22 years old and started writing a diary in English and sharing it with BethAnn, our seventeen year old daughter. And BethAnn would share her thoughts with her in response. That's been exciting and has made BethAnn feel like she's an important part of what we're doing.

What are you hoping to accomplish in the next three to five years as you get established in a new community?

Steve: We will begin planting a church in the area where we live. It's an area with over 150,000 people and fewer than 100 Christians—definitely an open area for the gospel. And we'll be doing this through a combined English class/bilingual chapel service where students will come for conversational English classes and then have a chapel service where we will speak in English with translation into Japanese. Through this, we'll begin to communicate the gospel and begin to plant a church.

As our readers pray for you, what are some things you would like to have them remember in the months to come?

Steve: The Lord has already answered one immediate need—property in West Kobe to serve as our residence and center for church planting. We can praise God together for supplying that.

Ann: I have to deal with discouragement at times because I set very high goals and those aren't always met. Pray that we'll have the ability to simply trust God even when our expectations and goals don't always come to pass. . .

Steve: Pray that we will be in touch with our Lord's expectations for us. . .

Ann: That we'll have patience with ourselves and won't become discouraged. We are so new to Japanese culture, the language and the customs are new to us. It's like starting life over as a child. We're learning how to live in totally new circumstances.

Steve: We know that many people are regularly praying for us and this is a real encouragement as we face the challenges of each day. We especially appreciate your prayers as we finalize plans for building the new center for ministry in West Kobe. ❑

Steve and Ann Lay have been career Advent Christian missionaries since the fall of 1990.

Father, Son and HOLY SPIRIT?

Bill Chadwick
Portland, Maine

Responding to Tim Setzer's December 1992 Witness *Column, Pastor Bill Chadwick asks us not to be too hasty in our judgements of the movement known as "signs and wonders."*

FRANKLY, it scares me when I hear God's voice. "Tell her to bring the child up for prayer." At five days of age the baby's navel was beet red and swollen. The doctor had demanded the child be placed in the hospital but the family, constrained by funds and a fear of medical facilities, had not obliged. Stunned by my request in the middle of the service, she brought the child forward. Early the next morning the doctor called. The testing he had done on Saturday confirmed his worst fears. The child was in a life-threatening situation, and he demanded his parents to meet him at the hospital. When examining the baby, the doctor was shocked to find that the child's condition was healed. "This just doesn't happen," he stammered, "How could she be...I have the test results!"

I often reflect on the difficulty Jesus had in revealing the power available to those who asked God for it (Luke 11:9ff). Stinging words were hurled at Jesus as he sought to use the power of the Holy Spirit in his ministry. "By whose authority do you do these things?" (Matt.21:23). "He breaks our laws and traditions!" (John 7:23). "Surely his power comes from the Devil!" (Mark 3:22). It didn't then, and it does not now.

Lost in the transition of the reformation has been the church's solid support and use of the power of the Holy Spirit. In an effort to recapture the right to use the Bible, the doctrine of "sola scriptoria" birthed an intellectual relationship with Jesus, at the expense of the experiential relationship with the Holy Spirit that had served the Lord, the apostles, and the early church fathers. Faith became blind, and heartfelt worship and service...the devil's emotions.

Stereotypes can distort reality

Early Pentecostalism produced a stereotype that grossly distorts the reality of today's spirit-filled ministries. Fanatical absolutes, which were associated with this movement, are inappropriately applied to churches today who dare to say that the Holy Spirit has a primary position in ministry, mission, and theology.

Modern charismatics involved in the "signs and wonders movement" are often equipped with solid philosophies of ministry, trained with proper exegetical tools, and able to articulate intelligent systematic theological positions. Maturity in spiritual gifts is producing for these churches rapid growth from conversions, as Satan's kingdom yields to the power of God (Luke 10:18ff.)

The vitality of this movement has threatened churches who do not utilize the grace gifts. The fact remains that in the entire world, churches which have developed ministries employing spiritual gifts are the fastest growing. It is important to note that these churches grow through conversion growth, the biblical imperative, not transfer growth, the cultural form.

Room for a variety of gifts and ministries

In judging the "signs and wonders movement" keep in mind these facts:

1. Jesus our model used the grace gifts, and instructed us to do likewise; (Matt. 12:31, Luke 9:1ff, Luke 10:1ff, John 14:11ff, John 16:5ff, Acts 1:8.)

2. All New Testament authors give instructions on how to apply the Holy Spirit.

3. The early church fathers (Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Augustine) utilized spiritual gifts, and taught that they are a vital part of the ministry.

4. The church prior to the Reformation utilized spiritual gifts as standard operating procedure.

5. There is no biblical foundation for the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit or the grace gifts from the church. This is a tradition created by man.

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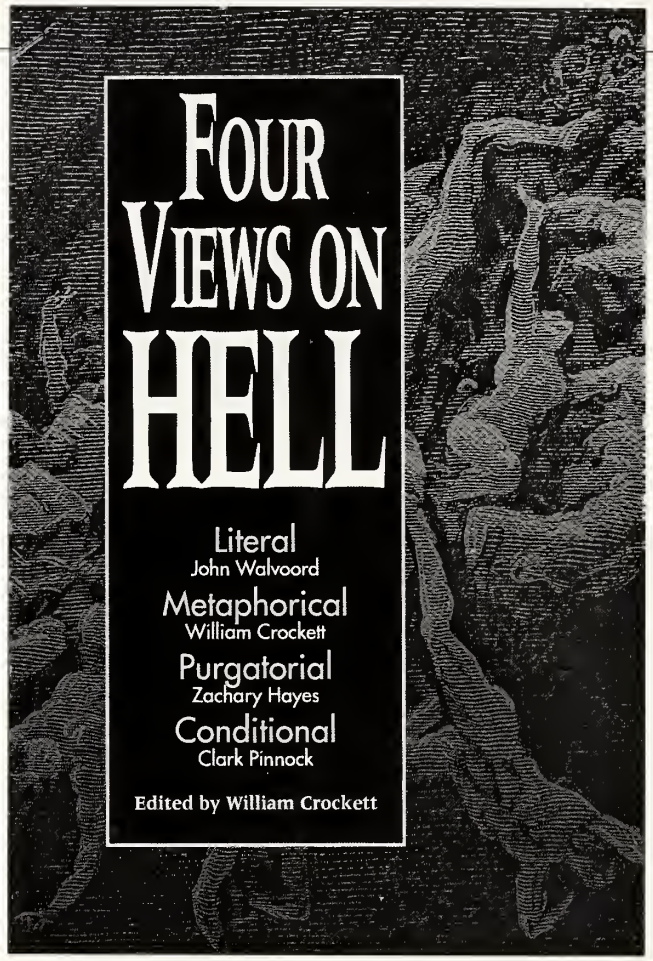
A RESPONSE



Good News for Advent Christians

Edward Fudge
Houston, Tex.

Four Views on Hell. Edited by William Crockett. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, 190 pp., paper, $14.95.

THERE IS SOME good news for Advent Christians and others (such as myself) who hold to conditional immortality. For the first time in nearly 1600 years, Bible-believing Christians across denominational lines are beginning to realize that the understanding of hell as everlasting conscious torment might need to be reexamined. Adding to the excitement, a number of highly-respected evangelical theologians and preachers have publicly stated their conclusion that the traditional doctrine is unscriptural and ought to be rejected. That list already includes John R.W. Stott, Stephen Travis, John Wenham, Michael Green, Clark H. Pinnock, and the late commentators Philip E. Hughes and F.F. Bruce.

I find great satisfaction in the publication of *Four Views on Hell*, in which the two best authors refer repeatedly to *The Fire That Consumes*. Our biblical arguments against eternal torment and for conditional immortality are finally being taken seriously—by those who find them persuasive and also by those who do not! In the Lord's providence, Advent Christians have helped make that happen, not only by their faithful witness through trying times, but also by their moral and financial investment in *The Fire That Consumes*, which God has graciously used as a major catalyst in this new awakening.

Four Views on Hell is just what the title suggests. John Walvoord, of Dallas Theological Seminary, argues for what he calls a "literal" understanding of hell. William Crocket, of Alliance Theological Seminary, sets out what he calls a "metaphorical" view. Clark H. Pinnock, of McMaster Divinity College in Canada, presents the case for conditional immortality and the final extinction of the lost. Zachary J. Hayes, of the Catholic Theological Union, argues for purgatory. Each man writes a chapter positively presenting his own view, to which each of the other three contributors makes a short reply. The book is stimulating, and all open-minded people can profit from it. We should thank God and Zondervan for its publication.

Walvoord's "literal" hell

Walvoord believes that the damned will suffer conscious agony forever in literal fire. To his great credit, he is terribly grieved at the thought of anyone suffering the hell he describes. (A few extreme advocates of eternal torment actually say we should rejoice in that notion!) He seems totally unaware of biblical arguments against his view, or those for conditional immortality. As a result, he measures "orthodoxy" by his particular tradition, and accuses anyone who differs with lack of respect for biblical authority.

Although he quotes many Scriptures, most of them, if interpreted *literally*, would appear to say the opposite of what Walvoord believes.

He cannot conceive of "eternal punishment" in any terms other than "everlasting conscious torment," and so he interprets every biblical reference to eternal punishment in that light. Unfortunately, he is a prisoner of his particular system of dispensational theology, which tends toward absolutism about everything and allows little room for independent Bible study or growth.

Crockett's "metaphorical" hell

Even though we finally have to disagree with it, Crockett's chapter gets much higher marks than Walvoord's. He is a competent Bible scholar who studies passages in context, understands different types of biblical literature, and appreciates the importance of looking at ancient non-biblical Jewish and Christian works when interpreting passages of Scripture. He is also fair toward those with whom he disagrees, pointing out that it is prejudicial and improper to lump those holding to conditional immortality with the cults and sects, as is so often done.

In the end, Crockett argues for eternal conscious torment of some undefined, metaphorical character. Pinnock responds by asking Crockett whether he really would like to take the hell out of hell, but doesn't break decisively with the tradition lest he be accused of liberalism and unorthodoxy.

Hayes' purgatory

Hayes does not really belong in this book at all, since purgatory in Catholic thought is a place of purification for heaven-bound souls, not a place of temporary or final punishment for the lost. Nevertheless, this chapter proves a fascinating survey of the origin of that doctrine among Catholics, and raises some interesting questions for Protestants to chew on as well.

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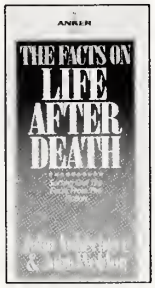
And Bad News....

The Facts on Life After Death. by John Ankerberg & John Weldon. Eugene: Harvest House, 1992, 48 pp. paper.



THIS IS THE LATEST in a series of vest-pocket size paperbacks by the same two authors having to do with cults, Eastern religions and New Age philosophies. The first twenty-five pages of this booklet deal with so-called "near death experiences" and their spiritual implications. The authors point out that "near-death" experiences are only that, and that they can tell us nothing about the realities which lie beyond this life. Such reports often include stories of "heavenly" experiences, overwhelming sensations of love, and benevolent figures clothed in white. The authors explain these as psychological in origin at best, and demonic at worst.

The final twelve pages of this pamphlet are another story entirely, and make it unwise to place this outrageous work in the hands of anyone not solidly grounded in biblical teaching already. This section consists of an uninformed and close-minded denunciation of the doctrines of conditional immortality and annihilationism, and a vicious attack on those who teach them. According to these authors, the idea that the wicked will truly be destroyed body and soul in hell is a cultic teaching and a doctrine of demons which Paul predicted would occur in the last days (1 Timothy 4:1).

In making their appeal to Scripture, these authors repeat the worst of the traditional arguments, which even most modern defenders of everlasting torment have now abandoned. For example, they argue that man's creation in the image of God proves that he is inherently immortal, and that even a million years of actual suffering could not possibly satisfy divine justice in the case of any lost person.

They sum up with the ridiculous statement that all biblical arguments advanced for the past 2,000 years against eternal conscious torment have failed. The truth is that until a dozen years ago, most Christians refused to even hear such arguments, choosing instead to wave the flag of tradition and verbally stone to death anyone brave enough to say anything different. Sadly, that is exactly what Ankerberg and Weldon continue to do.

A couple of years ago at a national conference of evangelical leaders, Ankerberg attempted to push through a resolution that would define "evangelical" to require a belief in everlasting torment. In the providence of God, wiser heads prevailed and Ankerberg's effort was unsuccessful. He frequently treats guests on his televised "John Ankerberg Show" so unfairly that even advocates of error gain the sympathy of decent viewers.

However, most evangelicals take the Bible more seriously than that, and a number of notable Christian leaders have now rejected the doctrine of everlasting torment as unbiblical and unworthy of the God who reveals himself through Jesus. Ironically, this tract closes by quoting with approval a prayer written by one of those men—John R.W. Stott, one of today's most gifted evangelical preachers and writers.

We need to pray for John Ankerberg and John Weldon, and for all who innocently pick up their latest booklet. ❑

—Edward Fudge

Why I Find Comfort In Conditional Immortality

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

I HAVE SPENT the greater part of my adult life among Christians who believe in the immortality of the soul. These people are very dear to me and I would not hurt any of them for the world. So, unless I am asked specifically about my belief, I usually remain silent.

One reason I do this is because there are Scriptures which appear to support their belief and there are those which support mine. Since the important thing is that we belong to Christ, and since my time of unconscious sleep will be as nothing until I see Christ, I see little reason for argument. I hate to hear Christians quarreling over scriptural interpretations, don't you!

However, my belief in the sleep of the dead has been a great comfort to me. I have none of the nagging worries that seem sometimes to face my Christian brothers and sisters about the "whereabouts" of dead friends and relatives. As far as I'm concerned they are all resting quietly at present and their final destination is in God's merciful hands.

I have no temptation to try to communicate with the dead—a trap into which some of my dear Christian friends have fallen, especially after the death of someone close to them. I am comforted that my dear ones are not "looking down" on the trials and heartaches of those they love. They are asleep; do not know what the world is suffering; cannot be reached for advice or help.

When my mother died, it was not possible to have an Advent Christian minister take her funeral service, so, we asked a young clergyman of another Christian denomination to do so. He was a fine pastor and had visited my mother many times in the hospital. They had shared their faith in Christ, and my mother was very appreciative of his ministry to her.

Sometime before the funeral my sister spoke to this man hoping that he would emphasize the Resurrection in his sermon. She explained, "Mother believed that death is a sleep. She did not believe she was going straight to heaven."

His quick reply was, "Well, she does now!" Because we liked the young man and we were grateful for his help and his kindness to Mom, we let his answer go. In fact, within our family it brought smiles. As far as we are concerned, she is resting peacefully in Jesus.

There is a danger for all of us to be too sure of ourselves to give a quick answer—to be argumentative and intolerant. There are a lot of Bible verses that are hard to explain. No church has every bit of the truth.

However, to me, it makes sense that we aren't called back from bliss to go to the Judgment and then be given our reward of eternal life which we have already. Neither will our unsaved friends be called out of hell where they are in torment to go to the Judgment and then be thrown back into hell to be tortured forever. The bulk of Scripture seems to teach that after death comes resurrection, judgment, and then reward or punishment.

I believe that death is a curse but that, at his Resurrection, Christ was given victory over death. Thank God, I have accepted Christ and am trusting in his return. If I die before he comes, I shall be awakened by the trump of God—given a new and glorious body and be made immortal. For me, this is truth and it gives me great comfort and serenity! ❑

Miriam Snow Priebe and her husband are members of the Advent Christian Church in Mechanic Falls, Maine. They served for many years in Venezuela with the Episcopal Church.

The Saved Sinner

A Testimony

J. Jaikumar
India

MY NAME is Jaikumar, and my home town is Palani. Though I was born to Christian parents and was raised well, I grew up not fully knowing Christ.

In my school days, I was drawn away. I wandered around town with bad companions, not coming home but getting into all kinds of evil. Although I would enjoy myself for a time, I was joyless. The reason was that in spite of all of my knowledge, I did not know about Jesus Christ. Although my parents raised me strictly, I must say that I was doing many wrong things they did not know about, because my group of friends encouraged me in them.

My mother and sisters received Christ first, and went to a Spirit-filled church. Jesus said that for his sake the world would hate his disciples, and their own household would become their enemies. So my mother and sisters were mocked, suffered hard words, and were talked about behind their backs by their relatives. I was one of those who greeted them this way. So was my father. However much my father beat them or spoke harshly to them, they said, "Our lives belong to Jesus," and they began to teach us about him.

They went to their church, and I went to the traditional church. But I saw that they had a greater joy than I did. They said, "Come to our church and see. You'll receive joy and satisfaction." But it seemed like madness to me. I put up with their saying, "Jesus is the answer," but my mind did not permit me to receive Jesus as my Saviour. The reason? Fear of my friends and relatives and enjoyment of the lustful things I had chosen. I didn't know about the joy and peace Jesus offers.

One day I went with my mother to her pastor's home. I didn't know that would be a turning-point in my life. When he saw me, the pastor invited me in and we chatted for a while. Then he told me about Jesus. The words he spoke showed me a picture of my inmost thoughts. A battle began in my heart, and I felt as though something was pressing me. My eyes filled with tears and I asked Jesus to forgive my sin. At that moment I sensed something special. I felt the burdens of my life being lifted and I experienced the presence of God's peace.

At that time I was near the end of high school. And as I read the Scriptures, I knew that God was calling me to his service. Now I am continuing my studies for his work. Even in these days of study and training for the ministry, God is leading me through difficulties, troubles and struggles in my body, soul, and spirit, for the glory of Jesus' name. In the future it is not I, but Christ who lives in me. ❑

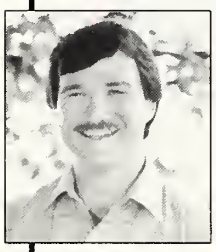
RAYMOND BEECROFT

FROM PAGE 3

publications, Rev. Beecroft served for many years as the administrator of Vernon Advent Christian Homes. Under his leadership, the Vernon Homes' ministry expanded dramatically and Rev. Beecroft received a special commendation from the Governor of Vermont for his contributions to nursing care and administration.

In a 1961 editorial, Raymond Beecroft wrote the following words: "Jesus never promised that discipleship and service would be a soft, secure experience. On the contrary, He taught that trial, test, and tribulation would be the lot of of those who would dare to follow Him. But He also promised strength, power, and the joy of achievement in witnessing and in the winning of lost souls for His Kingdom." God's kingdom and the Advent Christian Church are richer because of the life and contributions of this servant of God. We mourn Rev. Beecroft's loss. But we also look forward to the soon return of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of our resurrection hope. ❑

Disciple Maker



Clayton Blackstone

200 Proof Grace

OCTOBER 31, 1517. A date for ever etched on the pages of history. Ninety-five theses posted on the door of the Wittenberg Castle. Ninety-five theses designed to spark academic debate. Ninety-five theses which jarred the church to its core and sent shock waves throughout the length and breadth of the empire. Ninety-five theses fresh from the hot pen of Martin Luther.

We call it the Reformation.

The great divide of church history was, in the words of Robert Farrar Capon, "a time when men went blind, staggering drunk because they had discovered, in the dusty basement of late medievalism, a whole cellarful of fifteen-hundred-year-old, two hundred proof grace—of bottle after bottle of pure distillate of Scripture, one sip of which would convince anyone that God saves us single-handedly. The word of the Gospel—after all those centuries of trying to lift yourself into heaven by worrying about the perfection of your bootstraps—suddenly turned out to be a flat announcement that the saved were home before they started.... Grace has to be drunk straight; no water, no ice, and certainly no ginger ale; neither goodness, nor badness, nor the flowers that bloom in the spring of super spirituality could be allowed to enter into the case."

But, between you and me, it's tough to drink grace straight. Except for God, hardly anyone we know ever serves it up that way. Most of the time, we get what we earn. Hard work is, according to the maxim we learned in childhood, its own reward.

Luther tried to earn inner peace, but found that a sense of his own sinfulness overwhelmed his soul. He did all the correct monastic things. He lived right and studied hard. Still, tranquility eluded him. Until Luther discovered salvation as a gift, that we are all forgiven sinners and everything hinges on the mercy of God displayed in the sufferings of Christ, he knew no release from the battle for his spiritual sanity.

But even if we know the theology, it's still difficult to drink grace straight up. A part of us confidently asserts that we deserve at least a few of the good things God sends our way. But a tiny voice deep within counters with a powerful litany of reasons why we fail to qualify for the gold watch of his love. And, in the end, the tiny voice almost always wins out.

Hangin' out with the unlikely crowd

Jesus doesn't fit most of the molds we create for him. He refused to climb the social ladder. In fact, he seemed to enjoy hanging out with company unfit for a king. According to Brannon Manning, he reveled in the company of "the poor, the blind, the lame, the lepers, the hungry, sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors, the persecuted, the downtrodden, the captives, those possessed by unclean spirits, all who labor and are heavy-burdened, the rabble who know nothing of the law, the crowds, the little ones, the least, the last, and the lost sheep of Israel."

Manning refers to the lot as "ragamuffins." Uncertain of the term, I consulted Webster. "A disreputable tatterdemalion." Say what!? I flipped to "tatterdemalion." "A ragamuffin." Thanks for nothing, but I think I get the picture anyway. Our expanded list would probably include, "turkeys, wimps, folks with AIDS, teens with pimples and long hair, and the politically incorrect." In short, just about anyone outside the "in" group.

Just this week, I stumbled onto

> Grace tells us that we are accepted just as we are. We may not be the kind of people we want to be, we may be a long way from our goals, we may have more failures than achievements, we may not be wealthy or powerful or spiritual, we may not even be happy—but we are nonetheless accepted by God, held in his hands....And if we are held by God we will be held together; we will not fall apart.
>
> —*Donald McCullough*

the story of a disreputable tatterdemalion. Just looking at him, I suppose we'd call him a runt. Even the women towered over him. He compensated for his lack of stature by throwing his weight around. I suppose his position gave him "bully-itis." He worked for the IRS, or at least its counterpart in first-century Israel. In fact, he occupied the office of chief agent in the Jewish city of Jericho.

Nobody liked him much. But then again, when you're rich, who cares. Since Jericho sat at the center of a principal trade route, Zacchaeus kept getting richer. He made his money by extracting a higher tax than his contract with the Roman government called for. A disreputable tatterdemalion if there ever was one. Crooked. Mean spirited. Corrupt. Hardly the sort we'd expect to get all excited about seeing Jesus. But he did.

On his way to Jerusalem and the cross, Jesus stopped in Jericho, and Zacchaeus got wind of the visit. The story fails to drop a single hint as to why the tax collector found the possibility of seeing Jesus so intriguing. They could have met on some previous occasion. Maybe Zacchaeus had heard about how this fellow had lovingly invited Matthew, one of his fellow tax collectors, to become a disciple. Or he might have listened in on a conversation between travelers telling stories about the Master's miracle-working power while waiting in line to pay their taxes.

We can only guess at his motive. What we know for certain: he wanted to see Jesus so badly he climbed a tree to accomplish his goal. It probably never dawned on him what folks would think if someone detected him perched on a branch in order to get a look at this itinerant preacher. Then again, since everyone wanted to see Jesus as badly as he did, no one would be looking up anyway.

Nobody, that is, except Jesus. When he had positioned himself underneath the tree, he looked up, called the disreputable tatterdemalion by name, and invited himself to dinner. We'll never know, at least this side of eternity, how Jesus knew his name. It doesn't matter. He just did.

Dinner invitations don't mean now quite what they meant then. Today we hobnob at power lunches, dine with those who have favored us or party with those with whom we work. In first-century Palestine, eating together signaled mutual acceptance, the desire to become friends. Jewish law prohibited eating with people with soiled reputations. The only thing worse: actually participating in the sin which made them unclean.

The religion of the day banned Jesus from sharing a meal with ragamuffins—the beggars, the tax collectors, the prostitutes. It was a religious and cultural no-no. Still he told Zacchaeus he'd like to join him for dinner—by implication, to accept him as an equal and be his friend.

> Life can be miserable, horrible beyond enduring, the pits. But the secret of grace is that it can be all right at the center even when it's all wrong on the edges. For at the center where life is open to the Creator and Savior God, we are held, loved, led, cared for and inseparably bound into the future that he has for every child that he claims as his.
>
> —*Lewis Smedes*

The chief tax collector gladly welcomed the opportunity to host such a distinguished guest. He and his family probably didn't entertain much. And, of course, people talked: "Of all the people Jesus could have eaten with, none was more undeserving than this disreputable tatterdemalion. It just wasn't fair, him eating with a traitor to the Jewish cause and all."

Pop the cork

But they (and we) should have expected nothing else. After all, he came to reunite sinners with his Father. Transgressors. Ragamuffins. Disreputable tatterdemalions. Men and women like Zacchaeus the tax collector. Mary the prostitute. The nameless blind man. And us (if we allow a moment of honesty). Deep inside, we know that we're not nearly as good as we pretend. But that's the beauty of God's grace. We don't have to be.

Grace, according to Donald McCullough, means "that in the middle of our struggle the referee blows the whistle and announces the end of the game. We are declared winners and sent to the showers. It's over for all huffing, puffing piety to earn God's favor; it's finished for all sweat-soaked straining to secure self-worth; it's the end of all competitive scrambling to get ahead of others in the game. Grace means that God is on our side and thus we are victors regardless of how well we have played the game. We might as well head for the showers and the champagne celebration."

We find the invitation as difficult to comprehend as Zacchaeus and the Jewish folks who witnessed the exchange. But, as Brannon Manning suggests, "If Jesus appeared at your dining room table tonight with knowledge of everything you are and are not, total comprehension of your life story and every skeleton hidden in your closet; if he laid out the real state of your discipleship with the hidden agenda, the mixed motives, and the dark desires buried in your psyche, you would feel his acceptance and forgiveness."

We don't know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus inside the wealthy man's home. I suppose it's pure speculation, but I think they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I doubt Jesus took him to task. But when it was all over, the ragamuffin emerged a changed man. He pledged restitution four times over. The Law only required full compensation plus one fifth. An "above and beyond the call of duty" response to the grace of the One who came to seek and to save lost ones frequently known as disreputable tatterdemalions.

It's nothing short of amazing. ❑

GOD'S LITTLE ANGEL

Jane Palmer
Lewiston, Idaho

ONE DAY, as I was visiting a friend, I noticed a small hand-carved angel resting on her mantle. She stated that it had been crafted in another country by a famous master-craftsman, and had been given to her many years ago.

As I crossed the room to take a closer look, I noticed that the angel's appearance was not what I had expected. One wing had been broken off, part of its halo was missing, and the violin it once held no longer existed. My friend explained that it had once been whole and complete, but through many moves, and tiny hands grabbing to "look at the pretty angel," it was now in this peculiar condition.

She further explained that although it was in such a broken condition, because of the beauty it had once possessed, and the new beauty that it now held, she counted this little angel as one of her most precious treasures.

As I sat there looking at the little angel, considering my friend's words and watching her gaze upon the little angel with such tender love, I was struck with the reality of what she was saying. I could almost see Jesus looking at me with the same tender love as I stood there in my broken-whole condition.

I was reminded that I, too, at the time of my creation, was molded by the Master's hand in beauty—unmarred, fresh, and clean. But then, as I began my journey in life, I soon found a fresh scratch on the surface, then maybe a little nick. The experiences of life had "broken a wing" or damaged my "halo." There may even be a time when the purpose for which I was intended will change and the "violin" will be removed so that my hands can be empty to receive. And then there are the many, tiny, loving fingers which add their own finishing touches to the broken-whole process.

At the end of life the little angel no longer has its original appearance, and on "that day" I will find that it's O.K. Jesus, too, will have kept me. On "that day" he will look upon his little angel with great tenderness and love, and proudly proclaim, "This, my little angel, is precious to me, and I count it among one of my precious treasures." ❑

Jane Palmer is a graduate of Berkshire Christian College and currently works as secretary for the First Church of the Nazarene in Lewiston, Idaho. She enjoys teaching Bible studies, reading, and music and is currently working on a master's degree in Biblical Studies.

National Women's Conference scheduled for June

Beatrice Moore
National WHFMS President

JUNE 1993 will bring a unique opportunity for Advent Christian women across Canada and the United States to participate in three events: the first Advent Christian National Women's Conference, the National Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society triennial meeting; and fiftieth Advent Christian General Conference delegate session. You 'll not want to miss these, so plan to attend and receive a tremendous blessing from the Lord.

The theme for the National Women's Conference is "Bee All that God Wants You to Bee." The conference will feature:

Mamie McCullough

Mamie is an exceptional speaker. Coming from a background of abuse, poverty, divorce, and depression; the Lord touched and changed her life and led her into a life of joy and fulfillment. A passage from Isaiah, "I have called thee by name. . .since thou was precious in my sight," has been especially meaningful to her.

Mamie is called the "I Can" lady and will share life-changing principles to help you live with enthusiasm and purpose as Jesus Christ works in and through you. As you meet other women who have been influenced by her ministry, you'll thank the Lord for her availability to Advent Christian women attending this conference.

Connie Fairchild

Connie will share her experiences from fourteen years of missionary service in Indonesia along with insights about how global development projects are opening new areas for mission work. We'll be challenged to be ready for the dramatic changes impacting missions around the world.

Carolyn Schaeffner

Carolyn is a young, vibrant Christian woman who will share her music ministry with us during our worship time. She will also coordinate musical talent from throughout the denomination for our conference.

The conference schedule looks like this:

Thursday, June 24

2:00 p.m.	Registration and Tea
3:30 p.m.	Enrichment time

Speaker: Connie Fairchild, Director of Foundation Relations for World Relief, the relief arm of the National Association of Evangelicals

6:00 p.m.	Dinner, special music, and Mamie McCullough

Friday, June 25

8:30 a.m.	Prayer, praise, and worship
9:00 a.m.	Mamie McCullough
10:30 a.m.	Break and special music
11:00 a.m.	Mamie McCullough
12:15 p.m.	Lunch and free time
1:30 p.m.	Worship and special music
2:00 p.m.	Mamie's final challenge

Plan now to join us for this exciting conference. For more information and a registration brochure, write or call the Office of Women's Ministries; P.O. Box 23152; Charlotte NC 28227; (704) 545-6161. ❑

Holy Spirit from page 7

6. Proper exegesis of Matthew 12:31 indicates from the text that the unpardonable sin may well be calling what God does through the grace gifts, the work of the Devil.

In these last days surely the lawless one will come and, of course, he will try to duplicate God's power. The method of discernment must be the biblical guidelines established in Matthew 12:33; what are your fruits? That will separate the wheat from the chaff, stewards from worthless servants, and those who love God from charlatans.

Let us be careful about who we are calling the enemy. There is room in the body for a variety of gifts and ministries which all honor God and expand his kingdom. Let's walk together, maintaining unity and love, that the world will know that we are his disciples. ❑

A graduate of Gordon Conwell Seminary, Bill Chadwick is pastor of Stroudwater Christian Church (A.C.) in Portland, Maine.

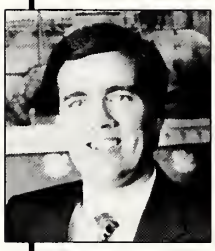
I Choose to Live

Though some may choose to die
I choose to live
In spite of children's hair grown gray;
And grandchildren with little ones;
And everything so speeded up—
While I go slow—
I choose to live.

Great music still is sweet
And flowers bright.
Each spring still stirs my heart.
Friends' faces grow more dear.
New ideas still excite.
What possibilities there are for good
Next year,
And after that!
As long as God permits
I choose to live!

—*Miriam Snow Priebe*

Family Builder



William Batson

Married to your Forever Friend

DO YOU REMEMBER the time you first met your spouse? Remember how you enjoyed just being together, laughing and talking about the everyday things happening in your lives? Your relationship and friendship grew stronger and you understood each other so well. It became obvious that you were destined to be forever friends.

But something may have happened along the way. The unrelenting demands on time and energy have caused too many couples to drift without an emotional anchor into a sea of aloneness. The remedy for such imperiled marriages is to build a solid friendship with one another.

Being best friends, my wife and I have developed a love of mutual affection, rapport, and companionship. But it has not come automatically. Friendship could not be counted on as a built-in benefit of marriage. It was nurtured. Our friendship deepened as we invested the time and attention to overcome indifference and neglect.

Friends stay in touch with each other

Staying in touch with each other has invigorated our friendship. We realize that consistent special efforts are necessary to maintain a continuing relationship. It may take the form of a card or note on a not-so-special day, a phone call in the middle of the day, or spending time together. To neglect these special efforts is to risk allowing the relationship to wither and possibly disappear entirely. It is surprisingly easy to drift apart emotionally while living under the same roof. Changing priorities and lifestyles can shift your focus from your forever friend to tasks that need to be accomplished. Staying in touch restricts that drift.

Friends share themselves

Sharing our thoughts, feelings, and experiences has created an openness that has deepened the bond of our forever friendship. Without this level of sharing we may be acquaintances, but we are not friends.

In *The Friendship Factor*, Dr. Alan Loy McGinnis tells of a woman who had been married many years but had become involved in an affair with another man. Dr. McGinnis assumed their clandestine meetings were filled with great sexual energy. She said: "To tell you the truth, I've only slept with him two or three times, and it wasn't all that great then. The reason I'm so in love with him and want to be with him so badly is that we can talk. We discuss things for hours on end. Gosh! It's great to talk to a man like that—to tell him everything that's in your heart, and have him do the same with you. Why don't my husband and I ever communicate like that?"

People who do not talk fail to see the vital importance of communication to their forever friendship. Andre Maurois defined a happy marriage as "a long conversation that always seems too short." You must want to share yourself with your spouse if your friendship is to grow.

Friends support each other in troubled times

Another element of our forever friendship is that we are supportive

during troubled times. Friends must always be there for one another, not only during the good times, but also during times of emotional turmoil or personal crisis. To have such a friend is a wonderful source of strength.

The immense practical value of this friendship component is found in this Bible quote: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NIV). Everyone falls down somewhere along the path—moral failures, spiritual wilderness experiences, blows to the ego, career set-backs, sins. Who is there to help us up? Our friend will help.

Paul Tillich said, "The first duty of love is to listen." Compassionate understanding is more needful than words during a personal crisis. Touching in supportive ways i.e., hugs, holding hands, sitting close together, can be like a soothing oil in a biting experience. It is also helpful to show you care in tangible ways—cooking a special meal, arranging time alone, or doing more to keep the children occupied.

A forever friendship is what a marriage is all about. Pleasure, romance, sex, and emotional highs are part of the total relationship. However, at the core of marriage is a partnership built on fulfilling companionship, cherishing one another, emotional closeness, and an unconditional acceptance of your friend. Your spouse is valuable and worthy of your investment of time, trust, and vulnerability. The reward is a forever friend. ❑

William Batson lives in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, with his wife and daughters. He pastors the Advent Christian Church and conducts Family Builder Seminars for churches and conference centers.

HOMOSEXUAL from page 3

pens all across the country. No one deserves that, no matter who they are or what their position in life. And in case other evangelicals are not willing to say it, let me make it clear: It's not Christian to beat someone just because they are a homosexual and it's well past time for evangelicals to condemn this type of hatred.

I hope that Advent Christians everywhere have the maturity necessary to know what it means to speak the truth in love—to articulate what the Scriptures teach concerning homosexual practice and at the same time express God's love to homosexual people. In writing this, I realize some will think I'm too soft on homosexuality. Others will consider me a bigot because I believe homosexual practice is not God's best for our lives. I'm willing to take the heat because I believe that God loves homosexual people just as much as he loves heterosexual people. He wants them to respond to the gospel. And he desires that our churches be places where they can grow in Christ, experience the power of God at work, and find forgiveness and deliverance. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
ABIDE
SEEK
KNOW

May

1 Pray for **George and Beverly Teshera** as they provide leadership for Advent Christian mission work in the Philippines and at Oro Bible College.

2 Praise God for the commitment to Christian service expressed by students at **Oro Bible College**.

3 Pray that **Margaret Helms'** visa will be extended to permanent status as she continues to work on developing an evangelistic radio broadcast.

4 Praise God for the good ministry **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** continue to have in the Philippines.

5 Pray for **David Vignali** as he oversees final preparations for the Advent Christian General Conference triennial sessions next month.

6 Pray for safety in travel for all who come to Aurora next month for the **General Conference meetings**.

7 Pray that God will give wisdom to General Conference **speakers** as they communicate his truth with us.

8 Pray that Advent Christians in **Liberia** will experience God's power as they communicate the gospel in their war-ravaged nation.

9 Praise God for the Christian commitment that **Rev. and Mrs. Ben Cleon** have demonstrated during their many years of ministry in Liberia.

10 Pray for Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Nigeria** as they communicate the gospel and plant new congregations.

11 Pray for **Frank Jewett** as he seeks God's will in leading a team to Nigeria to work with Advent Christian leaders there.

12 Pray for **Ruth Soucier** as she continues to teach English and share the gospel with her Japanese students.

13 Praise God that **Steven and Ann Lay** have found a suitable location for church planting work in West Kobe, Japan.

14 Pray that God will give courage to Advent Christian pastors in **Japan** as they speak about Christ's love.

15 Pray that lives will be touched for Jesus Christ

today in Memphis, Tennessee, as **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** serve there.

16 Praise God for **Abel Garcia-Lara**'s commitment to plant a Hispanic Advent Christian Church in San Diego.

17 Pray that God will lead graduating students from **Tecate Bible Institute** into fruitful areas of ministry in Mexico.

18 Pray that **Arturo Angulo, Ever Perez, Alberto Gomez,** and **Ernesto Gamez** will see people come to Christ this week as they proclaim the gospel.

19 Praise God for the people who have come to Christ in **India** through the ministry of Advent Christian pastors and churches there.

20 Pray that these **new followers** of Christ will be effectively discipled in their Christian faith.

21 Pray that God will give good health and strength to our three India missionaries: **Marion Damon, Barbara White,** and **Beryl Joy Hollis.**

22 Pray for Advent Christian missionaries serving in Malaysia: **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam; James and Mercy Devadasson;** and **Ruth Devairakkam.**

23 Pray that the **lordship of Jesus Christ** will be the focus of the Advent Christian General Conference meetings next month.

24 Pray that as **Penny Crusade** wraps up in many Advent Christian churches, God will continue to make us aware of the need to reach lost people with the gospel.

25 **Praise God** that our salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ and that our sin has been forgiven because of Christ's death on the cross.

26 Pray that Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** will continue to sense God's leading and direction as he maps strategy for the future of Advent Christian missions.

27 Praise God for the many years of ministry given by **retired Advent Christian missionaries**. Pray that their service will continue to bear fruit in growing Advent Christian churches around the world.

28 Pray that Advent Christian **military chaplains** will be effective as they minister to the needs of troops in the armed services.

29 Pray for regional superintendents: **W. James Smith, Clinton Taber, Warren Rivenbark, Richard Thurston,** and **Hal Vannoy.**

30 Pray for **Warren Rivenbark** and his wife **Mildred** as he finishes his work as Southern Region Superintendent and as they make plans for their retirement years.

31 Pray that God will continue to restore a **Great Commission passion** to the heart of the Advent Christian Church.

Good News

from page 9

Pinnock's conditional immortality

I have saved the best till last! Pinnock's chapter offers an outstanding presentation of what we believe the Bible teaches on this subject. He is an excellent theologian and philosopher as well as Bible student, and his arguments cover practically all the bases. His responses to the other chapters are relevant, analytical, and to the point. His chapter is well worth the price of the book, which would be an excellent non-threatening gift to anyone whose thinking you wish to stimulate on this topic.

Pinnock is not only an academic scholar. He also has a passionate heart for the lost, and he witnesses to and reasons with men and women of all sorts wherever he finds them—in the academic environment and outside it. Like many others who interact with real people, Pinnock has discovered that the traditional notion of everlasting torment is an obstacle to evangelism. As it happened, he discovered that problem long before he found the solution in a better biblical understanding. Based on his own experience and those of his associates, Pinnock states that most people who reject the traditional view do so first on moral grounds (because it is out of keeping with God's character as revealed in the Bible), and later because of biblical texts concerning final punishment. Opponents have exploited this statement to charge that our position is grounded in sentiment (it doesn't "feel" right) or expediency (it doesn't "work") rather than in Scripture.

My own experience was different from Pinnock's in that regard; I first learned the truth from Scripture, then realized with joy that my new understanding "sounded more like God." Even given Pinnock's experience, however, the criticism is unfair and unfounded. Pinnock (and other noted evangelicals such as John Wenham and John Stott) who sensed moral difficulties with the traditional doctrine assumed at first that Scripture taught it, and they did not reject it easily or hastily. Only after they found better scriptural understanding did they finally give up the tradition. As a matter of fact, the idea that God will torture people forever does strike most people as out of keeping with the character of God and of Jesus Christ who reveals him. It is also an obstacle to evangelism.

Because of his biblical stand on this subject, Pinnock has come under intense and often malevolent persecution. Pray for him, that he will have grace to overcome evil with good. ❑

Edward Fudge is a practicing attorney living in Houston, Texas. He is the author of The Fire That Consumes, *a landmark defense of the biblical doctrine of conditional immortality.*

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

So much in me seeks influence, power, success, and popularity. But the way of Jesus is the way of hiddenness, powerlessness, and littleness. It does not seem a very appealing way. Yet when I enter into true, deep communion with Jesus I will find that it is this small way that leads to real peace and joy.

—*Henri J. M. Nouwen*

The new evangelical church emerging in urban America will have an unprecedented character all its own. Short of major reversals in the national and political agenda affecting urban centers, it will increasingly become for the most part a church for the dispossessed, for those whose lives are lived at the margins of society. The upwardly mobile will drive by on clogged freeways wondering what is happening in the old place. Or, fearful of getting shot at from the hills above, they will simply stay away, in their Clapham villages.

—*William Pannell in* The Coming Race Wars?

Life is a journey, and the one thing we all have in common is that we start out on that journey lost and disoriented. Most of us go through life distracted. Our early brushes with suffering are like a polite child who comes alongside us and tugs at our coattails to get our attention. The more suffering we experience in life, the louder and more insistent that child becomes. When we finally stop what we're doing and bend down to listen, the child whispers in our ear. . . . and points the way home.

—*Dave and Jan Dravecky in* When You Can't Come Back

Something isn't true because it's in the Bible, it's in the Bible because it's true.

—*Haddon Robinson*

. . . **I'm not surprised** when a person in emotional pain is enraged with God or struggles with his faith. When the psalmists poured out their honest feelings about God's "distance" when they were in pain, I believe God was neither shocked or offended by their struggles with Him. I think he understood and accepted them right where they were, just as he accepts me when I question him. Knowing this helps me relax when a friend's faith is shaken.

—*Becky Broden in* Discipleship Journal

Love, not anger, brought Jesus to the cross. Golgotha came as a result of God's great desire to forgive, not His reluctance. Jesus saw that by His vicarious suffering He could actually internalize all the evil of mankind and so heal it, forgive it.

—*Richard Foster*

The key to our ability to live as free men will be whether we can internalize fully that we are forgiven, that God loves us even when we fail, and that our growth toward holiness is in God's loving and sovereign hands. Unless we can accept that both salvation and sanctification are by grace, our striving will always lead to frustration, anxiety, and eventual despair.

—*Tom Eisenman in* Temptations Men Face

It's hard enough to hear criticism when it comes in love, but no one likes to hear it when it's hard and harsh.

—*David Roper*

Grace tells us that we are accepted just as we are. We may not be the kind of people we want to be, we may be a long way from our goals, we may have more failures than achievements, we may not be wealthy or powerful or spiritual, we may not even be happy, but we are nonetheless accepted by God, held in his hands. Such is his promise to us in Jesus Christ, a promise we can trust.

—*Donald McCullough, in* Waking from the American Dream.

Jesus Christ is either demented—on the level of a man who thinks he is a poached egg. Or he is a demon from hell. Or he is God Almighty. But let's have none of this nonsense about Jesus merely being a good teacher; the facts won't allow it.

—*C. S. Lewis*

When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing, we worship anything.

—*G. K. Chesterton*

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
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Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
American Advent Mission
Velacheri, Madras 600 042
INDIA

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
125-8 Deai Tamatsu Cho
Nishi-Ku, Kobe Shi 651-21
JAPAN
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Ruth Soucier (August 12)
c/o Osugi Keiichi
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Nara Shi, Nara Ken 631
JAPAN
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Floyd and Musa Powers
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Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
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Advent Christian
WITNESS

May 1993

Jesus' Vision

Transformed Lives

An interview with Leighton Ford

Features

Jesus' Vision: Transformed Lives 4

In a wide-ranging interview, evangelist Leighton Ford reflects on his own Christian faith and crucial issues facing evangelicals as we approach a new century.

Finding the Love of Your Life 10

How do you choose the right mate? Noted Christian psychologist Neil Warren focuses on six issues for Christian young adults to consider before choosing to marry someone.

Ministering Directly to Jesus 12

Roy Morrison is an Advent Christian pastor who has found God's call to serve as a prison chaplain. Here, he challenges us to consider ministry to those in prison and offers some tips on how to get started in prison ministry.

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On the Cover

Transformed lives. That's Jesus' goal for us and our Christian ministry. Leighton Ford expands on this in a special *Witness* interview starting on page four.

Volume 41, Number 4

Advent Christian
WITNESS

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Tough Questions Dan Rather Wouldn't Dare Ask

ONE OF MY frustrations with television and newspaper journalists is their unwillingness to ask tough questions of people and organizations they sympathize with. That's especially true when it comes to the cozy relationship many reporters seem to have with the so-called "gay-rights" lobby. Here are some tough questions that I think a lot of folks would like answered. I'm not holding my breath waiting for Sam Donaldson, Dan Rather, or Tom Brokaw to ask them.

1. Why do homosexual-rights advocates use hateful names to describe those who disagree with them? Not everyone who opposes the gay-rights agenda is a bigot, a "homophobe," or a "gay-basher." In the words of Adam Myerson in *Policy Review*, "There is nothing 'hateful' about opposing gay-rights legislation, fifth-grade textbooks promoting the virtues of homosexuality, or sexual conduct that undermines discipline and morale in the military." The flippant use of hateful names by the homosexual-rights lobby makes me wonder where the hate really lies.

2. Why does the homosexual lobby continue to use suspect science to press their claims that homosexual behavior is normal? Most gay-rights advocates and their fellow travelers in the media love to quote the old Kinsey study that claims ten percent of the population is homosexual. But the Kinsey methodology was seriously flawed and more recent studies suggest the actual number is between two and four percent.

3. Can homosexual-rights groups honestly believe that they qualify for special protection by the law based on their sexual practice? Legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the American With Disabilities Act of 1990 provides protection to people on the basis of who they are, not what they do. If homosexual practice merits special protection, will we then be required to protect the lifestyle practices of drug-abusers, white supremacists, and child molesters?

4. How do homosexual-rights activists respond to all of the conflicting research about whether homosexuality is inborn or chosen? In my view, the gay-rights groups simply push the results they like and suppress the ones they don't. It will take decades before a clear answer is obtained and no matter which conclusion is reached, a whole new set of political and social questions will arise.

Tolerance does not mean acceptance

Americans are a tolerant people. Individual freedom and liberty are a rich part of our cultural heritage. We even extend that freedom and tolerance within reason to people whose lifestyle choices we disapprove of or find morally wrong.

I think most evangelicals share that perspective. While we strongly disapprove of homosexual practice, we don't want to see homosexuals denied the basic liberties guaranteed to all Americans by the constitution. But we're alarmed when acceptance is substituted for tolerance, when science is twisted by homosexual-rights groups for political ends, and when hateful names are maliciously used to assassinate the character of well-meaning people who oppose the homosexual lobby. And we're concerned that encouraging homosexual practice will only contribute to the continuing moral and cultural breakdown that's destroying thousands of lives.

Christians must never shrink from speaking the truth in love, despite the pressure to conform and the harassment that will surely come. That truth involves some important biblical realities: Homosexual practice—like adultery, greed, prostitution, slander, and a host of other morally wrong practices—is a reflection of our sinful nature. But God loves homosexual people and Jesus Christ died so that all of us—heterosexual or homosexual—can find forgiveness for our sin, a fresh new relationship with God, and the promise of eternal life in his coming kingdom. ❑

Jesus' Vision

an interview with Leighton Ford

For over forty years, Leighton Ford has proclaimed the Gospel in Canada, the United States, and throughout the world. He served for thirty-one years as an associate evangelist for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and in that capacity, Leighton conducted evangelistic crusades in a host of small, medium, and large cities and towns. Today, Leighton's ministry focuses on equipping and training younger Christian leaders to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Leighton shared his reflections about his calling to Christian ministry, Christian leadership, discipleship, and several other issues with us earlier this year.

Leighton, as you grew up, when did you sense the Christian faith becoming real to you?

I'm adopted and I was deeply influenced by my adoptive mother. She was a devout Christian woman who wanted to be a missionary. She taught me the Scriptures from the time I was very young. She also taught me how to pray and took me to summer conferences. And I accepted Christ as a five-year-old boy at a Canadian Keswick Bible Conference. I heard the Gospel presented very simply during children's meetings. They asked how many understood the presentation and wanted to accept Christ. I put my hand up and was told that I was too young. That happened three times and finally they realized that I understood as much as a child could.

But the real turning point in my life came at about age fourteen. There were some problems in my family at that point. My mother had become emotionally ill and I was feeling very lonely. I went to another summer conference—a small Christian conference near my home in Canada—where I met a group of young people. There was such a reality about their Christian faith—the way they talked about the Lord, the way they sang. The speaker that week, Dr. Oswald Smith, of Toronto, talked about the importance of having a quiet time with the Lord. I remember going out into the woods, getting my Bible, reading it as Dr. Smith said he did, walking around and praying out loud as he said he did, and learning that God was there and cared for a lonely fourteen-year-old guy with a lot of desire to serve the Lord. That was the beginning.

Out of that came a strong desire to share my experience with other young people. We started a series of youth rallies in my home town in Ontario. That grew into Youth for Christ in that area. But those two experiences at camp combined with the influence of my adoptive mother were formative in my life.

As you grew in your Christian faith and began to wrestle with some of the issues that Christians face, were there some intellectual doubts that you had to struggle with?

Yes there were. I attended Wheaton College at the suggestion of Billy Graham where I received a wonderful education and an even more wonderful wife. But during that time I started to wonder, "Was this whole Christian thing true or was it simply something I had been brainwashed into believing? I think that kids who grow up in a Christian background often face that because they haven't seen the stark contrast of coming from darkness into the light. They've always been around the Christian faith and so they ask, "What other lights

Transformed Lives

might there be?" So as I studied philosophy and studied the Scriptures, I faced some serious questions about the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, the existence of God, the diety of Christ. And that was an intellectual testing point in my life.

I believe there is a significant difference between doubt and unbelief. Unbelief says, "I won't believe because I don't want to believe." Doubt says, "I have these questions." There are some folks who've never had a question, who possess a simple, strong faith. But in many cases, our faith has to be tested in order for it to grow stronger. In my case, I had to wrestle through those questions—think, read, talk with my professors, pray, and believe that there were genuinely satisfactory answers. The writings of C.S. Lewis made a profound impression on me at that time. But those questions were very real.

Since then, there have been times when I've gone through periods of doubt where the issues were more subtle. I can remember one time when doubt was much more existential for me. It was while I was serving as an evangelist for the Billy Graham Association and we were having a difficult time preparing for a crusade I was going to hold in Seattle, Washington. We faced a lot of problems. And on a plane flying from Charlotte to Seattle, God disappeared. It was like he wasn't there. It was such a dark night of the soul for me. I came back and told my wife Jean, "I have all of these deep doubts. Is God there?" And I questioned whether or not I could keep preaching because I had to be honest.

But I remember one long night two blocks from where you and I are sitting, where I stayed up until about 4:00 in the morning feeling a terrible lack of self-worth combined with all of these doubts. Jeannie listened and at one point, she took my face into her hands, looked me right in the eye, and said, "I love you. I love you." She was an angel of the Lord ministering to me at that time and in the morning, I began to get over some of that. So whether it's existential or intellectual, I've known those doubts.

Can doubt be a healthy thing for Christians to experience?

I think so. In some senses, it's a natural part of the questioning that goes on while you're growing up. To exist means to stand out from your surroundings and there's a sense in which a young person has to stand out from what they've heard—not in a rebellious way but in a way where they discover a faith that is their own. Many times, that will involve questioning and doubt. We shouldn't be afraid of that.

We don't want to make people into doubters. I don't believe in the techniques used by some college professors who deliberately try to instill doubt. But I think we should be prepared for those natural questions that come because those questions are part of the growing process and part of the tempting process. Sometimes, the Devil will come and tempt us to doubt. We have to be honest and realize that most of us do have doubts at one point or another. It's better to bring them out in the open, ask those questions, and seek for honest answers. Then, having been tested, you develop an authentic faith that is yours.

We have to be honest and realize that most of us do have doubts at one point or another. It's better to bring them out in the open, ask those questions, and seek for honest answers.

Sometimes that happens with people later in life. I have a friend who accepted Christ at a young age and later in life, she's asking many questions. But she's not moving away from faith, she's growing in her faith. God does not want us living all of the time in doubt. But it can be a useful tool to bring us to a living, active faith in him, a faith that is authentically ours.

Let's switch gears and talk about Christian leadership. You've recently written about the nature of leadership from a Christian perspective. What are two or three things that in your view set a Christian style of leadership apart from the secular models we hear so much about?

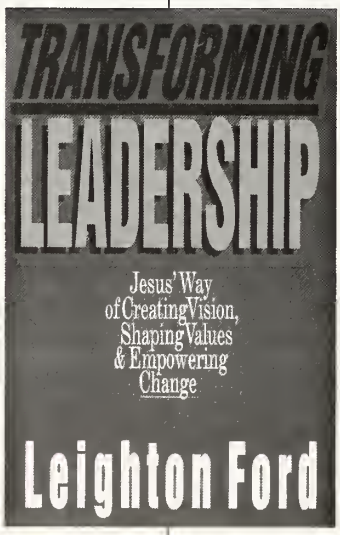
That's a question I'm glad you're asking because I think we have imported the leadership models from our secular culture into many of our Christian leadership programs and literature. And while there are some good things in those secular models, we've not asked an important question about them: "Is this Christlike leadership?"

When I wrote *Transforming Leadership*, I tried to take a good look at Jesus' style of leadership. Several unique things struck me. One, genuine Christian leadership grows out of our very being, not just our activity. Jesus' leadership grew out of his relationship with his Father. The Father said to him, "You are my Son. My beloved Son." Genuine leadership in Christ grows out of a sense of security that comes from knowing that I belong to the Father; I have been redeemed by Jesus Christ; I'm a son or daughter of God. And mis-leadership comes when we try to work out our own personal agendas and identity through seizing the power of leadership. Our relationship with God has to be the foundation for Christian leadership.

The second thing is that Jesus' style of leadership is kingdom leadership. It's not a matter of finding five or ten leadership tools that we can use to achieve our own ends. There are good principles of management we can use to make ourselves more successful but the key question is this, "Am I a kingdom seeker?" In other words, "Am I seeking to build my own empire or am I seeking God's rule?"

A third mark of Christian leadership is that it's always servant leadership. Jesus told his followers, "The Gentiles lord it over one another, but it will not be so among you." Christian leaders are called to be servants. And Jesus demonstrated this in the way he lived. He was Lord but he was among us as a servant. It's important to understand that Jesus did not say, "Let him who gives up leadership be a servant." Instead, he said, "Let him who leads do it as a servant." Leaders are not to abdicate leadership responsibility but we're to lead with the attitude of a servant. Christian leaders are not here to run their own show. We're here to help those we lead become fulfilled and effective in kingdom service.

One more thing. For Jesus, leadership focused on people. His vision was transforming people. That's why his leadership development with his disciples was relationship and community centered. He was concerned not just with patterns of behavior but with how they thought. In the Master's leadership courses they would walk together through the hills or down by a lake. The disciples would see someone healed by Jesus. And all through that, Jesus wanted to see the mind of God formed in his disciples.



Someone has said, "Christianity began in Palestine as a relationship; went to Greece and became an idea; went to Rome and became an institution; came to America and became an enterprise." But the essence of Christian leadership is to help people develop their full potential and maturity under God.

It's interesting that these Christian leadership principles can be reflected in "secular leadership" and some of our secular leadership models are catching up to what Jesus said two thousand years ago.

Many Christian leaders today struggle with maintaining or preserving institutions—a local church or a Christian organization. How can we move our focus off of institutions and onto people?

It's hard because you need institutions in society to carry out certain expected things. For groups of people to accomplish things, there has to be some organization. But it's so easy for those organizational things to become all important to us. I'm not sure that I can fully answer your question except to keep going back to Jesus and asking, "How did he spend his time?" Then I need to measure what I'm doing against that. Am I spending so much of my time as a "Christian leader" in plans and programs that I'm not spending enough time with people? That's a constant question we have to ask.

All of us in Christian leadership have to spend time with those who financially support our work. When I'm talking with a financial supporter, do I see that person just as a donor or as a disciple—helping them not only release their funds for the Lord's work but also seeing every aspect of their life so that I'm concerned about them not only as a source of funds but as one through whom God is ministering to people.

That's a constant tension especially in the organizational culture of our modern world. Organizations usually begin with visions. But before long, the vision gives way to maintaining the organization. That's why organizational renewal is so important. We need to realize that institutions which start out with a good purpose can get to the point where they've worn out that purpose. They may need to die or be replaced.

Much of your work focuses on the development of younger Christian leaders. How did you come to see this as your primary ministry task?

Partially because of what people did for me while I was in high school. A man named Evon Hedley, who was the head of Youth for Christ in Canada, took a chance on me when I was only fourteen. He allowed me to be president of the youth rally. I made lots of mistakes but he encouraged me. Billy Graham was a mentor to me. While he didn't deliberately set out to do that, he had a significant influence on my life. I wanted to repay that by working with younger leaders because I knew what impact Evon Hedley, Billy Graham, and others had on my life.

The second thing that contributed to this direction for our ministry was the death of our twenty-one-year-old son, Sandy. He was a junior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and died from complications of heart surgery. Sandy loved the Lord, was a leader, and was heading for some form of ministry. His death was a very deep wound. We loved him deeply and we grieved deeply. Out of that, the Lord gave Jeannie and myself a desire to help other young people to run their race for Christ. Sandy was a runner who ran his race for the Lord. We started the Sandy Ford Fund which has provided money for students training for missions and evangelism.

One other thing. Several years ago I discovered, in my travels with Billy Graham and on behalf of the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization, that there was a leadership gap. There was a group of senior leaders who had emerged after World War 2. And there was a group of younger men and women age forty and under now coming into leadership. This was true around the world. But there were not too many leaders between, let's say, ages forty and fifty-five or sixty.

So we're in the process of a major leadership change; and seeing that, I wanted to help those younger men and women identify and develop their

potential. And I wanted to help network the young, emerging leaders in evangelism. So we started Leighton Ford Ministries and our purpose is to help young leaders worldwide to lead more like Jesus and to lead more to Jesus. To lead more like him in terms of character and integrity. To lead more to him in terms of effectiveness in evangelism.

As you think about your role in mentoring and discipling younger leaders, are there some things that older pastors can do to identify, train, and mentor younger leaders?

I would encourage not only older pastors but older laypeople to be involved here because the mentoring and tutoring of the next generation of leaders is so important.

Leaders in their early forties need to be working with potential leaders in their twenties and encouraging them. Lay leaders within a local congregation can help disciple and train younger lay-leaders. Older pastors can work with younger pastors. I think that all of us need to be doing this as Paul did with Timothy, as Moses did with Joshua.

I found that so many young men and women are longing for someone to take an interest in them, listen to them, and encourage them.

There are three things that cause us to back off from this. First, we say, "Who am I to set myself up over someone else?" But you don't have to be an expert to be a mentor.

You just have to have some experience, be willing to share it, and able to listen to others.

Second, people say, "I'm afraid of the time it's going to take." Yet when you look at the Gospels, you see that Jesus had three years and where did he spend most of his time? Not with the crowds but with his twelve disciples. That's where the multiplication comes and how I wish I would have done more of this earlier in my own ministry.

Third, it's easy to be scared and say, "I'm not perfect and I'm going to be somewhat vulnerable if I let someone get close to me." Sure, but so what? We learn more about our own humanness when we let someone get close and see some of the mistakes we make. But through our mistakes, we're accepted and loved and we have something to give. I highly recommend a book called *Connecting* by Paul Stanley and Bobby Clinton. Paul Stanley is International Vice-president of the Navigators and is part of our Arrow Leadership Core Group at Leighton Ford Ministries. Bobby Clinton is a professor at the Fuller School of World Mission. They've written an excellent book on what mentoring is and how to do it. And they explore the different kinds of mentors we need. Anyone who is interested in having a kingdom influence in the lives of potential leaders would highly benefit from reading this book.

What I hear you saying is that we need to make the mentoring process more intentional.

I did an informal survey of several National Association of Evangelicals member denominations last year and asked, "Do you have in place a leadership development program for your denomination?" Two or three responded, "Yes, we do." Some said, "We're trying to develop something." And most of them said, "We don't have anything in place." I think there is nothing more important, next to our relationship with the Lord, than for us to be involved in training the next generation of leadership. That training needs to be intentional.

Whether it's a program like we've developed with our Arrow Leadership Program and the peer support groups we bring together, or whether it's simply an older person meeting informally with a younger person—we need to intentionally pray, "God, who are the people you want to raise up for leadership?" Then, we can go about building relationships with them and encouraging them.

I found that so many young men and women are longing for someone to take an interest in them, listen to them, and encourage them. We try to think of this process in terms of an arrow. We need to help people sharpen their vision like the point of an arrow and shape their values like the bottom of the arrow Then, we share in their ventures. What is God calling you to do? How can we help?

You've been traveling extensively in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union during the last three years. What do you sense God doing in those places right now?

In an overall sense, people there have a hunger for something different—whatever it might be—than what they've experienced for the last forty to seventy years. What they've had has not worked. There's a spiritual dimension to that. People there are open to anything "spiritual"—Christianity, New Age, Moonies, Hinduism—whatever. There is little discernment within that spiritual openness.

That spiritual hunger varies from place to place. There seems to be more responsiveness in parts of the old Soviet Union and Romania than in the Czech Republic. But that spiritual hunger is the greatest I've seen in my lifetime, perhaps next to Japan right after World War 2.

With that hunger, however, is a mood of disillusionment and frustration because they in essence, have to start everything over—the banking system, new businesses, education—all of those things.

We're finding a mixed situation in the churches. I have great admiration for their courage, bravery, and fortitude. They've remained faithful through oppression and persecution and they're beginning to look at new ways of doing things. But the church

faces problems. One pastor in the Czech Republic said to us, "We had more unity in prison than we do now out of prison because each denomination is tending to do its own thing." There is lack of trained leadership and in some cases patterns where leaders who have been there for years at the top of the hierarchy are not willing to let go and bring along the younger leaders. So there's a great need for leadership development.

Many Christian organizations and mission agencies are trying to establish work in Eastern Europe. What should they be doing to take advantage of opportunities there?

Western ministries going in need to do two crucial things. First, be extremely sensitive and humble—sensitive to what God has already been doing there. We do not bring the Holy Spirit to Eastern Europe. He has been there and the church has been there and when we go, we need to listen and discover what God has been doing.

Second, we need to ask, "How can we help you?" Our task is not to say, "Here's what we're going to bring to you." There needs to be a cooperative spirit, but unfortunately, too many groups have gone in to do their own thing. One pastor in the former Soviet Union said that he got seventeen letters, phone calls, and faxes in one week from people wanting to preach in his church on Sunday morning. There's a lot of competitiveness and one-night-standing in evangelism without ongoing follow-up and discipleship.

There's a great harvest and a great need. But Christians here need to work in partnership with each other and with our fellow believers in those Eastern European nations.

One member of what we call our Arrow Leadership Group is Phil Roberts who teaches at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He's also the dean of a new seminary in Rumania. Recently, he was asked to go to a research city about 100 miles south of Moscow where a number of academics and scientists live. They want to start a new school of the humanities and have asked him to come and help start a program. Phil can select his own teachers, set his own theological parameters, teach whatever courses he wants to. This is an amazing opportunity in a secular university setting.

I don't think we've seen anything in my lifetime that compares with the doors God is opening for ministry in this part of the world.

It's amazing to look back and see the role that the church played in the fall of communism.

Absolutely. And while that's been written about to some degree, it's still not known widely in Western nations.

Let me ask you about the United States. I sense a feeling that we stand at a crossroads. There's a new administration in power. We're rapidly approaching the year 2000. What are two or three important priorities that Christians in the United States and in Canada need to focus on?

That's a big question because our society is so secular and at the same time so religious. It's hard to sort out the difference between the two. It's a paradox—secularized religion or religious secularity. But we need to realize that the church has remained strong and healthy in the United States, much more so than in Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Part of the reason for that was that communism was such a major enemy. We said, "We've got to keep Christianity strong to keep communism out." Now, that was not the best motive but it did help.

Now that communism is gone, what motivates us as a nation and as a church? Is it simply that we're there to hold off communism? Or is the kingdom of God our motivation? I'm watching with interest to see how we come to grips with that. But still, we shouldn't be overly pessimistic. Yes, we have problems but there are still many strong local congregations and we shouldn't downplay that.

On the other hand, the United States is now the largest mission field in the Western world. Let me stress that again—the United States is the largest mission field in the Western world. We now have between 120 million and 200 million people here who are functionally secularist in their outlook. They have no religious memory and little religious experience. George Hunter puts it this way, "The church in the United States is not playing on the home field anymore. We're playing away games." We don't have the crowds, the cheerleaders, or the referees on our side. We face a secular situation.

Let's believe that God is God and we're his people. As one writer put it, "We are resident aliens." We are not first of all citizens of the United States or Canada, but citizens of the kingdom of God. The main issue is not whether George Bush, Bill Clinton, or Ross Perot is president. We ought to be involved in the political process and concerned about issues. But we're resident aliens—God's people—and Jesus Christ lives in us. We're called to be a different people. In our increasingly secular society, are we different in terms of our values and life-style?

The United States is now the largest mission field in the Western world.

We also need to be active in evangelism and church planting. Many of those secular people out there are not closed to the Gospel. They simply don't know about God's grace. I spoke to representatives of over fifty denominations, including your own, last September and I heard about plans to plant thousands of new churches in the 1990s. This is a time to evangelize. I hear many Christians bemoaning secular humanism. I hear far fewer

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Thinking about Faith and Service

Try Harder and Do More?

Tim Setzer

"DADDY, what can I do to make you love me more?" "Well son, you can begin by cleaning your room and taking out the trash. If you do that plus stop fighting with your little brother, I'll love you more.

"But remember, if you do not do these things every day, I'll love you less on the days you do not do them. In order for me to love you the way you want me to love you, you have to do these things every day."

What a ridiculous conversation. What kind of parent would say to their child, "I'll love you more if you clean your room, or I'll love you less if you do not clean your room?" We love our children because they are our children. We do not love them for how good they act or for what they do. We love them simply because they are our children.

One truth that many Christians seem to have missed is God's grace. Although we say we are saved by grace, and although this truth is taught in our churches, our lives do not reflect it. Suppose I asked, "Does God love you more because you go to church?" I think we would be shocked at how many people who would respond in a positive way. If we were to ask people what they could do to make God love them more, we would hear answers like—read the Bible more, pray more, go to church more, tell others about Jesus.

The big problem with this is that we can never do enough to feel like God really loves us. There is always something more to do. When we do not do everything we feel we are supposed to do, we experience guilt. Many times this guilt or unworthiness paralyzes us. It robs us of our joy in Christ and our confidence in Christ for doing his work.

It's true that Christians are to strive to live a godly life. But if the reason we are trying to live a godly life is to make God love us, then we've already been defeated. The reason we are to strive toward godliness is because God does love us. I do not live for God so that he will love me. I live for God because he does love me.

> **I do not live for God so that he will love me. I live for God because he does love me.**

For most people, it is easier to be accepted because of what we do. We have grown up in a performance-oriented society. We receive our self-worth on the basis of what we do and how well we do it. So it's easy to accept someone's teaching that we should do this or that for God to really love us. The truth of the matter is — I cannot do anything that will make God love me more than he already does. He loved me enough to send his only Son, Jesus, to die for me. My relationship with God is now "in" Christ. It's not what I do, but what Jesus has already done that enables my relationship with God.

The problem I see is that we pastors preach grace but emphasize works. Some do it consciously while others do it unconsciously. We need to stop making our people feel like they are better Christians or that God appreciates them more because they fulfill certain human standards of godliness. Many of us try to get people to live for the Lord or do the things we feel they should be doing by preaching condemning sermons, or "shame on you" sermons. I wonder what would happen if we simply reminded them of God's love toward them? I'm not saying there is not a place for preaching sermons that condemn. I'm simply saying that God's love for us is to be our motivator toward godliness and condemning sermons rarely have that emphasis.

The doctrine of works has crept back into nearly every area of Christianity. It is time we rediscover what Martin Luther found when he was at the point of utter despair in trying to please God: "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). ❑

Finding the Love of Your Life

Millions of young people marry each year. Millions also divorce. Heeding these early warning signals can prevent that trend.

Neil Warren
Pasadena, Calif.

EVERY PERSON I know yearns for love. And the most obvious place to search for it is in marriage. In fact, more than 90 percent of all the people in the United States will marry at least once during their lifetime. But each year in the United States, more than 200,000 marriages end prior to the couples' *second* anniversary.

Why do some individuals choose their "lifelong" partners so poorly? Because they have received almost no instruction about how to do it well. Our society—specifically television and the movie industry—teaches people to rely almost exclusively on their "natural instincts" when choosing a mate. But romantic feelings, those seemingly trustworthy emotions, offer almost nothing of substance when it comes to making a wise choice about a potential marriage partner. In fact, they frequently get in the way. They literally anesthetize you to the critical factors you desperately need to examine. Here are six traps to avoid:

Deciding too quickly

If anything catches my attention, it's two people telling me they're ready to pledge themselves to each other after just a couple of months. I can safely assume their decision is long on fantasy and short on reality. It is an indication to me that the "task" of marriage is being seriously underestimated; that the maturity it takes to make a marriage successful year in and year out has not yet been developed.

A few years ago, an empirical study by researchers at Kansas State University found "a strong correlation between length of time spent dating their current spouses and current marital satisfaction." They further found that "couples who had dated for more than two years scored consistently high on marital satisfaction, while couples who had dated for shorter periods scored in a wide range from very high to very low." Thus, the risk of marital failure is significantly reduced by longer dating periods.

I'm every bit as concerned about hurry-up *second* marriages—sometimes even more so. The possibility of a rebound effect is enormous. With this kind of crucial, life-changing decision, you need to be patient and thorough in collecting the important data. Take your time! It is much easier getting into a relationship than living through days and years of a painful, unfulfilling one.

Deciding too young

When two recent high school graduates come to me and declare their plans to marry, my brain immediately flashes *Danger*. I know the divorce rate for persons under 20 is incredibly high. Social scientists have found that people who marry young are seldom prepared for marital roles.

As a matter of fact, the divorce rate for 21- and 22-year-olds is twice as high as it is for 24- and 25-year-olds.

The theory goes like this: Young people can't select a marriage partner very effectively if they don't know themselves well. In this society, where adolescence often lasts until the middle twenties, identity formation is incomplete until individuals have emotionally separated from their parents and discovered the details of their own uniqueness. Prior to their mid-twenties, young adults haven't defined their goals and needs. They haven't had time to learn to be independent. They aren't in a good posi-

HOW NOT TO CHOOSE THE WRONG MATE

tion to know the kind of person with whom they could form a meaningful life-long attachment. They simply need more life experience.

Overeagerness

Even though it was more than 10 years ago, I remember well when Rick and Sally came to me for premarital counseling. From the beginning, Sally was clearly in charge, always answered first when I asked them questions, and corrected Rick several times as he related his experiences.

Rick hadn't dated very much, but seemed emotionally healthy and well put together. Sally's parents were divorced, and she was chafing to get of the house and leave her mother's iron-fisted authority.

I put Rick and Sally through the usual tests and interviews for any couple seeking my assistance. And from the beginning, I saw real problems. Their scores on the various personality tests were not very compatible, and they simply didn't agree on a lot of things. More than that, there was a feeling of tension between them.

When I tried to bring up one of my concerns from the tests and interviews, Sally would immediately explain it away. Rick often indicated a desire to talk more about the concern, but when Sally tried to quickly "resolve" and eliminate the problem, Rick always acquiesced. She was too strong. More than that, she was so eager to get married that she wouldn't look objectively at the facts.

Against my recommendation, they got married.

Only six months later, I heard they were heading for divorce. Under the stress of daily living, significant problems and differences began to appear.

There are a lot of reasons why people are "too eager" to get married. Sometimes they get worried that their partner will have a change of heart. Or they may be tired of being alone on weekends, and they are convinced that once married they will never have to be alone on a Saturday night again.

Overeagerness is pretty easy to spot. It is clearly one of those causes of marriage failure you want to eliminate from the beginning. A lifetime decision like marriage requires a clear, unhurried mind.

Choosing a mate to please someone else

Selecting a partner to please a parent or some other important person simply won't work! To make a good decision, you must make it in light of *your own* needs and dreams and life objectives.

Does that mean you shouldn't take seriously what the important people in your life think about your choice? Of course not. Friends and family know you well, and they want you to be happy. So you should listen carefully to their input and consider what they say. But whatever you do, don't jeopardize your life by making a decision just because you don't want to hurt your parent, or because you think your friends might think badly of you, or because the invitations are out, or even because someone older thinks the two of you would be good for each other.

> Why do some individuals choose their "lifelong" partners so poorly? Because they have received almost no instruction about how to do it well.

Not enough experience base

Sometimes couples come to me considering a decision about marriage, but their way of knowing one another and being known is just too narrow. It's not necessarily that they haven't dated long enough. They simply have not walked together through the variety of circumstances and situations necessary to really know someone. Here's an example:

Ever since Bob and Karen met, they've been living on a cloud, floating from one form of ecstasy to another. They are tremendously attracted to one another physically, and they feel wildly in love!

But they haven't ever talked much about other things. They don't really know what the other person likes or dislikes in most areas of life. They haven't spent much time together with the other family, and they have never had a single argument.

People who are so "in love" don't usually want to be bothered with "problem talk." They're convinced that they have all the evidence they need to choose one another. But it's crucial that you spend time with your spouse-to-be early in the morning and late at night; in heavy traffic and on country roads; in times of stress and easygoing moments. Observe him or her playing with children, doing household chores and balancing the checkbook.

The more experiences you have together, the better your chances of avoiding hidden surprises.

Unrealistic expectations

Recently a woman came to my office to talk about her failed marriage: "I just knew that once I married him, once he saw what love really was, then everything would be all right. Then he would change and love me back just as much as I loved him. I would be the one to open him up. I would be the woman who made life worthwhile for him."

Then there's the couple, on the verge of divorce shortly after the honeymoon, who said: "We had no idea we would have so many areas of disagreement. We can't even agree on the room temperature at night."

The truth is, successful marriages require an incredible amount of hard work. You will experience all kinds of pain, and there will be problems all

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Ministering Directly to Jesus

Roy L. Morrison
Olustee, Fla.

NOT LONG AGO, one of the members of a local church decided to become involved with his church group in prison ministry. He was apprehensive because his concept of prisons and prisoners was strictly "out of the movies." He envisioned heavy iron bars, clanging steel doors, and men in cells banging tin cups against the bars to get the attention of the guards.

When the group arrived at the *institution* (many states use that term instead of "prison"), he was surprised to find the front entrance garnished with flowering plants; trimmed grassy walkways; and a low, pleasant, and unassuming structure before him. His mental picture of 20-foot walls melted at the sight of simple fencing topped with razor wire.

As he passed through the administration building and control room, a vision of the 1940s movie version of a huge steel-plated gate flashed through his mind and he smiled. How naive he felt.

Inside the institution, the group followed an *officer* (another term adopted by many institutions to replace the word "guard") and noted the clean, bright halls that looked to him like part of a college dormitory. White-uniformed men appearing to be counterparts of hospital orderlies busily cleaned and mopped, or participated in administrative duties.

A place for effective ministry

Unfortunately, many church people have the movie-version concept of prison, and they mentally hear prisoners using foul language as they curse the guards, the administration, and those responsible for their incarceration. The movie prisoner vowed to "get that dirty rat" who snitched on him. Such visions are quickly dissolved by those determined to minister in prison because the modern prison is rarely like those depicted in the movies of old. Many Christians have discovered the opportunity to minister the Gospel in the facilities.

As Christians, we can't deny the fact that we are called to be ministers of the Gospel. It isn't simply those who occupy the pulpit who are called to this ministry of God's Word. All of us are part of the ministering process. Yet, there are people in the body of Christ who simply cannot find their niche in ministry. For those who feel they are groping for their place in effective ministry, and those who desire to expand their outreach, there is a key that unlocks a vast array of opportunities to *minister directly to Jesus*.

The Lord himself said, if you've "...done it unto the least of one of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." Nowhere else in Scripture does the Bible so succinctly paint a word picture of our ministry to the King of Kings than in this passage in Matthew 25:40. Conversely, the words of verse 45 put emphasis on the *undone* act and the curse of not ministering in the way prescribed in these passages from Matthew 25:31-46. We're to follow Jesus' admonition to act out our faith through ministry.

One of the aspects spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 25 is that of visiting people in prison. Too many "church people" don't comprehend what such

a prison ministry is, or how to go about visiting those in prison. Yet, a variety of opportunities exists for each of us to fulfill this great admonition of our Lord.

Receptive to God's Good News

Testimony after testimony pops up in churches where men and women have overcome their skittishness about ministering in jail or prison and tell the congregation what a "blessing it was to reach men and women who so desperately need to hear of God's love and forgiveness." Those who go into prison are usually astonished to discover that "these are regular people" who simply erred, were caught, and many times are ready to hear the Gospel for the first time.

Recently a middle-aged couple came out to be a part of a program at the institution where I serve. They are well-educated and somewhat affluent. But they were naive about prisons and prisoners and had never considered being part of anything to do with prisons. As I stood with them in the inmate-filled auditorium, they agreed that "these men seem so...so normal." I had to chuckle a bit and reassure them that many of the people who find themselves in prison are simply men and women who were once average neighbors and friends. Many are "doing time" because of a single act, designated as "a crime of passion." That couple was awe-struck by the fact that they had shaken hands with men convicted of murder, rape, bank robbery, child molesting, and other "heinous" crimes. Certainly these crimes are terrible. Yet God's view of sin hasn't changed. Jesus equated simple mental assent to lust as adultery and hatred of another person as murder. That gives us insight into the fact that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Becoming a volunteer in ministry to jail or prison is not difficult. Many churches have jail ministries and are willing to include those of other denominations to be a part of their group. Usually the pastor of your church belongs to a ministerial association in your area and has contact with those who are in touch with jail ministries. For those interested in prison ministry, a call or letter to the chaplain of the prison near you will yield the information and contact you need. Or look at the list of prison ministries with this article from which you may choose.

Here are a few basics to help you be an effective volunteer to jail or prison:

First, be yourself. Relax and know these men and women are people just like you. They've made mistakes (as most of us have) and they desperately need love and understanding.

Second, don't push the Gospel down the throat of this "captive audience." Rather, win the prisoner's love and confidence.

Another point. Speak to prisoners as you speak to anyone; using normal language. *Ecclesiastical jargon* (sometimes referred to as *"Christianese"*) is never appropriate when trying to witness to the unsaved, and it still doesn't work when speaking to prisoners. In fact, prisoners have a language all their own. You may wish to pick up some of the key phrases, but don't force yourself to use the prison lingo in order to make yourself a part of the scene. You'll sound phony. Again, be yourself. Dress appropriately. Jails and prisons are not conducive to any type of formal dress. Rather the casual, clean and neat appearance of those who volunteer to minister is

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Want to get involved in prison ministry? Here's a short list to get you started.

There are many jail and prison outreach ministries with local, state, national and international prison fellowships capable of giving you help and printed information about how you can effectively become involved in ministry to those in prison.

International Prison Ministry
PO Box 63
Dallas, TX 75221

International Prison Ministry is one of the most widely known prison ministries. It is headed by Chaplain Ray. Its main thrust is providing Bibles, books, tapes, and greeting cards for prisoners as well as holding prison retreats.

KAIROS, INC.
1298 Minnesota Ave., Suite E
Winter Park, FL 32789

KAIROS, INC., enters prisons on a regular basis, holding meetings that involve testimonies and one-on-one ministry.

Rock of Ages Prison Ministry
626 Sugar Creek Rd SE
Cleveland, TN 37323-9040

Rock of Ages sends teams into prisons around the country.

Prison Fellowship
PO Box 17500
Washington, D.C. 20041-0500

Prison Fellowship is the outgrowth of a prison sentence by Watergate conspirator, Charles Colson. In less than 20 years it has grown to be the largest prison fellowship in the world, taking trained teams into prisons for several types and styles of ministry.

Salvation Army
Correctional Service Bureau
120 West 14th Street
New York, NY 10011

Check with this headquarters address to get information for your involvement on a local basis.

Spanish Prison Ministries
PO Box 011267
Miami, FL 33101

Check with Rev. Agustin Perez to see how you may be involved.

EMPTY BOXES

Noelle Carle
Attleboro, Mass.

I TRIED to gather my wits about me. I felt heavy and sluggish, like soaking wet skirts entangled around my ankles. There I sat, sipping lukewarm coffee during the lull between getting Ryan and Emily ready for school. We were moving again.

"Not again, Lord!" I thought. It had been only three years since our last move. We were going to plant our roots here, spend years at this church. But the Lord had other plans for us.

The house was in chaos. Some things were packed. Others not. My thoughts were filled with confusion about when to pack what and what to keep unpacked until last. But the big question was, "When are we moving?" We didn't know yet. The house needed some work and the workmen weren't there when they were supposed to be. Every way we turned, there seemed to be frustrating delays.

Learning the value of waiting

But now, it was quiet. As long as I kept my eyes away from the car wash behind our house, it would stay that way. That place robbed me of my peace. It was always busy, even during the middle of the night. Some people pick odd times to wash their cars. But from where I sat, it was either watch the car wash or look at the living room wall.

Like Mother, Like Daughter

Kay Marshall Strom

ONE OF the obstacles to making friends with your mother probably will be that you are so much like her. Whether or not daughters like to admit it, in ways great and small, they are like their mothers.

Before you grew into a decisive adult who is able to chart your own life course, you were someone's dependent, impressionable, teachable child. And, for better or for worse, the kind of adult you have become is forever intertwined with the kind of mother you had.

It was from your mother that you learned the responses and reactions that are most deeply etched within you. Because you learned so thoroughly in such an intimate environment, whenever you become close to someone, you will find your old patterns automatically—sometimes unexpectedly—springing up.

You know all those memories you have of your mom and you? The ways she had of showing you she cared? The ways she *failed* to show you? The things she said that she shouldn't have said? The things she didn't say that she should have?

The trouble with memories is that they are unreliable. Even though you may remember an incident so clearly it seems as if it's being played out before you, your memory almost certainly is less accurate than you think it is. What you are remembering are your *feelings about* and *reactions to* incidents rather than the facts of those happenings themselves.

It's important for you to become aware not only of the negative influences that need to be changed but also of the positive influences that need to be carried on. And when you recognize in yourself the positive influences your mother has had on you, affirm her for those contributions. Tell her how much you appreciate what she has passed on to you. Write her write a note on her Mother's Day card and express what positive influence she has had on you. Not only will she appreciate knowing how you feel, but also you will become closer to her by articulating those feelings. ❑

Kay Marshall Strom is the author of Making Friends With Your Mother *(Zondervan, 1993, $7.99). Available through Venture Bookstore.*

My cat rescued me. Her name is Ebony and true to her name, she is black with a few sprigs of white under her chin. She had just finished her breakfast and was prowling around for a place to bathe. Beside my dry sink was a large packing case, empty and open. Since boxes were invented, cats have been sniffing them. Ebony approached this box casually, delicately sniffed its upper edge, then deciding it was suitable, she leaped in.

Silly, I thought. What's she going to do in an empty box? She prowled around its perimeters, then promptly plopped down and began her bathing. And in that instant, I learned something.

There have been times in my life when I've had to wait for things. Like most folks, I've chafed at the delay. I wanted things to start rolling and get moving. And I told the Lord so. I couldn't understand why I, of all people, had to wait. I tried to tell God how to work things out so life would flow smoothly without these frustrating checkpoints. Believe it or not, I prayed when I was pregnant, that my children would come early, or at least on time, so I wouldn't have to wait around for them! But when my cat stepped into that box and began cleaning up, I had a flash of insights about waiting, about God's timing, and about being impatient.

Trusting God's timing

God has reasons for the way he works. In some circumstances, after awhile, we realize why his way was better. Sometimes we still can't figure it out years later. But the point is that God knows what he's doing.

There are things to do while we wait. Maybe there is some area of our lives which needs some cleaning. Maybe it's a time for much needed rest, if we will let ourselves relax. Perhaps God wants to teach us one of his many lessons. Whatever the need, God has a purpose.

There are many Bible characters who had time on their hands and needed to wait for further instructions. Consider Noah and his family in the ark. Did feeding the animals consume all their days, or were there times when they sat and gazed at that gopher bark, wondering when it would all end? Sarah, in her anguish to have a child, had to wait well over sixty years to see God's hand move. David, hiding in the caves, and Elijah, in the Kerith Ravine, both waited for some sign that life would return to normal.

I know my cat wasn't waiting for anything. Her life is an endless series of naps and meals. But God used her to show me that when I feel boxed in

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You Believe in Missions?

Oh, you believe in missions!
Is that what I heard you say?
"Of course I do, my good friend,
Why else would I be here today?"

There's an alcoholic down the street;
He's hurting some, you know.
"I got no truck with folks like that;
Let his next-door neighbor go."

Do you know that poor homeless fellow
In the woods behind the school?
"Hey! I wouldn't have him in my house.
I'd get some disease from that old fool!"

There's a young girl in our neighborhood;
She's pregnant some folks say.
"She always was a wild little thing.
I knew she'd end up that way."

We should help her make plans
For the baby, in her time of need.
"Well, maybe she'll have an abortion.
That's one less mouth the taxpayers will have to feed."

I'm making a list of people
Who will give kids a ride to church.
"My Sunday mornings are so hectic,
But I'll pray for you in your search."

There's a woman over on Main Street;
She needs a ride to work.
"Let her drunken husband take her,
That no-good, worthless jerk!"

The have three small children
And I hear there's some abuse.
"The welfare won't do anything;
Why go see them? What's the use?"

Let's go visit in that rest home.
Where conditions are so bad.
"Oh, I can't stand the smell in there.
And besides, it makes me sad."

I know a drug abuser who has AIDS.
Let's go visit with his wife.
"You won't get me in *that* house.
Hey! You're talking about my life!"

Our church men visit prisoners;
Let's go with them and observe.
"That's one ministry I don't believe in.
They got just what they deserve."

The soup kitchen needs some money
To feed the hungry every day.
"I wish that I could help you.
But I have *my* bills to pay."

Oh! You believe in missions?
Is that what I heard you say?

—*Frances N. Pittman*

Francis Pittman is active at First Advent Christian Church in Morganton, North Carolina. She wrote this poem for the Piedmont Conference annual WHFMS Convention held at First Advent Christian Church in Hickory, N.C., on the last Saturday of February.

The Chain Broken by the Word

A. Manoah
India

I KNOW well a young man brought up in a zealous Christian tradition. Outwardly he was a good man, one whom his relatives praised because he went regularly to church, and sang in the choir. But his heart was sinful beyond measure because he lived thinking of God and the world in the same terms. His traditional church did not give him proper teaching.

His sins were gambling, fornication, lust, useless arguments, envy, and pride. He made fun of and picked quarrels with God's children who talked about the Bible. And his sinful nature grew.

That young man would talk philosophy. He would say that holy books, worship and religions were all to bring order to society, and that people would get nothing from them. Whatever he thought good in his heart, he would get some happiness from it. That was his god. This philosophical belief led the young man further into sin. He said to his Hindu friend that, whatever he did, nobody should know. That friend was a witchdoctor, one who worshiped Satan. He had the young man do everything according to the Devil's advice. Because of this, many sins were not outwardly revealed, no one knew about them. He lived without realizing that there is a God who cared personally about him.

Then, God opened a door to draw that young man to himself. Because of his job, he went to another city and stayed for three months. While there, he met some Christians and one of them became his friend. He would talk about the Bible and say that God was alive and that he hears what we say. The young man who was living in sin had no mind to receive this because the Jesus he had seen was in statues. "God? Alive? Ridiculous!" he thought. The believing friend supported what he said from the Scriptures. But the young man still argued and quarreled about it.

In the end, his friend urged him to visit his church, and see how God was working there. He agreed. He went one day with his friend to the Sunday service. That day the pastor spoke from Romans 1:21-25.

Then God began to make him realize his sin. The pastor explained how God brought darkness to the hearts of those who, though they knew God, did not glorify him. The young man realized that the explanation pointed to him and his sinful nature. Because of the piercing conviction of sin, as soon as the service was over, he met the pastor and asked what he should do. The pastor showed him from Proverbs 28:13 that in order to receive God's mercy he must confess his sin. He began to confess his sins and his mind became tender. He cried aloud, "God, be merciful to me. I am a sinner. But you are holy. You are holy." The compassionate God cleansed him by his blood, and broke the traditions that bound him. I am that person who became a child of God.

I'm the one who received deliverance from sin. I am that young man who received God's call to the ministry and am preparing to serve him. When I was a sinner God did not abandon me, but loved me. ❑

Boxes from page 15

and all I can do is wait, there is a good reason for it. The psalmist wrote, "O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for him," and "My soul finds rest in God alone." I needed a time of rest to prepare for the busy time ahead, and God knew that. For two weeks, there was no more packing to do, no more repairs to be made, and nothing that I had to do. I had time to rest, and I discovered that I needed that time to later cope with the newness of life in a different house.

I thank God that he provides for us, even when we don't understand what we need. The next time you find yourself waiting, use that time to grow more in love with God. Relax, rest, sharpen your prayer life, work on those sins that beset you. Maybe you'll want to be like my cat and take a bath. ❑

Noelle Carle lives in Attleboro, Mass. where she and her husband, Pastor Russell Carle serve the Advent Christian Church there. Noelle has had several articles published in the Advent Christian Witness, and wrote the 1990 Penny Crusade Program Kit.

Love from page 11

along the way. And however well your marriage turns out, you will still have dozens of personal challenges to test your mettle. To expect anything different is to set up your marriage for trouble.

But marriage doesn't have to be rocky. In fact, by heeding these warning signs and changing our mate-selection procedure, we can experience a lifetime of meaning. So, no more second-rate choices. Great marriages can be our goal. ❑

Dr. Neil Warren is a psychologist in Pasadena, Calif. This article is excerpted from his latest book, Finding the Love of Your Life *(Focus on the Family).*

Prison

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necessary.

Every institution has rules for security. Learn those rules and follow them. They are, for the most part, simply a matter of common sense approaches to visitation within such a secure setting.

Certainly you may run across a prisoner who has been "down" for some time and wishes to obtain special favors from those new to the volunteer log. Those persons may ask you to do something that is against the rules: bring something in, give them some spare change, take something out to a family member, and so forth. Simply follow the rules and state the fact to the inmate asking you to do something that is not right. Many times, the answer to a wrong request is, "Let's go discuss this with the chaplain (or volunteer supervisor)." If the inmate knows he's asking for something that is not within the scope of the rules, he/she will decline to discuss it further.

Don't let me put in this minor negative concept without balancing it with the fact that such requests are rare, and for the most part the men and women in institutions have a desire to be loved, find friendship, and nurture a long-lasting contact. So the majority of those incarcerated are careful to follow the rules and help you do the same. The pleasant surprise of finding new friends behind the fencing and razor wire is fascinating. I've had citizen volunteers tell me they are anxiously awaiting the release of a particular prisoner so that their friendship may be expanded.

You may be surprised to find fully-committed Christians "doing time." More than ever, Christians are being attacked by satanic forces that have aided in a slip from the pure Christian life and has resulted in jail or prison. Yet 2 Corinthians 7:10,11 gives an understanding of God's view of those who have backslidden and repented: *"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter."* If we look at the repentant heart and see it as cleansed by the blood of Jesus, as God does, then we will approach those in prison as we would approach anyone who has sinned and repented.

Finally, the ministry in jails and prisons is highly esteemed by the Lord Jesus. If you desire to minister directly to Jesus, volunteer jail or prison ministry may be your answer. ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor Roy Morrison serves as Chaplain at Baker Correctional Institution at Olustee, Florida.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

June

1 Praise God for the **Tecate Bible Institute graduates** ready to serve Jesus Christ in Mexico.

2 Pray for national missionaries: **Alberto Gomez, Ernesto Gamez, Arturo Angulo,** and **Ever Perez** as they continue to establish new Advent Christian congregations in the Baja California province of Mexico.

3 Pray for field superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he provides leadership for Advent Christian mission work in Mexico.

4 Praise God for the good report that **Marion Damon** received from the doctors when she returned home for medical tests.

5 Pray that God will give **Marion Damon** strength and boldness as she works to extend God's kingdom in India.

6 Pray that **Barbara White** and **Beryl Joy Hollis** will sense God's leading as they work to communicate the Gospel to people in India.

7 Praise God for the work of **Abel Garcia-Lara** as he provides leadership for a new Hispanic Advent Christian congregation in San Diego.

8 Pray that **Nolan and Linda Leavitt** will sense God's guidance as they plant a new Advent Christian congregation in the metro-Charlotte area.

9 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** continue to have in the inner city area of Memphis.

10 Pray for **Lee Welkley** as he provides leadership for New Life Community Church, an urban Advent Christian congregation located in the Springfield district of Jacksonville, Fla.

11 Praise God for **George and Beverly Teshera** and the leadership they're helping to provide at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

12 Pray for **Margaret Helms** as she works to develop a radio broadcast and ministry in the Philippines.

13 Pray for Rev. **Ben Cleon** and the pastors of the Advent Christian Church of **Liberia** as they proclaim the Gospel in that war-torn nation.

14 Pray that God will use Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Nigeria** to touch lives for Jesus Christ today.

15 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they begin planting a new Advent Christian congregation in West Kobe, Japan.

16 Pray for **Ruth Soucier** as she communicates the good news of Christ's love to people she comes into contact with through her English classes in Japan.

17 Praise God for **Sayoko Crabtree's** service as pastor of the Asukano Advent Christian Church in Japan.

18 Pray for **Floyd and Musa Powers** as they carry out several special assignments for Advent Christian missions in Japan.

19 Praise God for the lives that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** were able to touch through their teaching assignment at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

20 **Praise God** that through his kindness and grace, he has made salvation available to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 Pray that God will call Advent Christian men and women to **mission service** in the months and years to come.

22 Pray for **David Vignali** as he oversees last minute details for the General Conference sessions that begin this weekend.

23 Pray for **Mamie McCullough, Connie Fairchild,** and **Carolyn Schaeffner** as they provide leadership for the National Womens Conference starting tomorrow in Aurora.

24 Pray for God's protection, wisdom, and strength for all those traveling to Aurora, Illinois, for the **General Conference** delegate sessions.

25 Pray that the Lord will speak through **Dann Spader** as he leads the Advent Christian Pastors' Conference in Aurora today.26 Pray that God will guide the delegates as the General Conference sessions begin this morning.

27 Pray that God will speak through Executive Vice-president **David Ross** and Hope Church, Chicago Pastor **Charles Cooper** as they lead morning and evening worship services at General Conference today.

28 Pray for Rev. **Arthur Stone**, pastor of Oak Hill Bible Church (A.C.) in Oxford, Mass., as he addresses the General Conference delegates this evening.

29 Pray for Dr. **Ted Ward**, from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, as he speaks to the General Conference delegates this evening.

30 Pray that as delegates leave Aurora today, God will use the Advent Christian Church to **extend his kingdom** in our lives, our communities, our nations, and our world.

Leighton Ford

from page 8

praying for and witnessing to secular humanists, believing that they can come to Christ.

A third thing is that we must be people of prayer and holiness. We need to be distinctive—not "holier-than-thou," but not totally molded by secular society.

Wherever God places us in society, we're ministers for Jesus Christ there. We're in a new situation now. During the apostolic age, there was a little band of believers in a hostile world. Then for almost fifteen hundred years, the church was almost identical with society around it. Now we're back to the same situation the apostles faced—believers facing a society which is hostile, curious or indifferent. We're in a mission field and every Christian is a missionary.

You've had the opportunity to communicate the Gospel with people who are secular in their outlook. What are some ways we can be sensitive to these folks?

First, get to know them as people. Discover their interests, their concerns, their needs, their questions. We need to be confident enough to listen to their questions—their honest questions. George Gallup has said that many non-believers would love to visit a church where they could ask their questions, raise their doubts, and feel like they've been listened to. We need to communicate basic Christianity and listen to their questions and concerns. We need to learn how to penetrate their culture.

Os Guiness says, "It's not so much that we don't have enough Christians in the world. We don't have enough Christians being what they are where they are."

One last question. The Concert of Prayer movement that has been growing in cities over the past several years. Do you sense that we might be seeing the beginning of a fresh work of God in terms of revival?

I don't know yet. Like you, I've been impressed with that movement and believe that the movement itself is a fresh work of God. On the local level where these have taken place, the Concerts of Prayer have brought believers together in a way that nothing except for the Billy Graham Crusades and other crusades have done in the past. And that in itself is significant because where you have a visible witness given to the unity of God's people, he promises to bless that. This emphasis on praying for unity, church renewal, and the evangelization of the world is definitely of God. Historically, how broad and deep that will be, I can't venture a guess at this point. But it's a sign of hope.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Jack Hayford

...**I believe** that it might turn out to be the sovereign decision on God's part to use Bill Clinton to bless the United States.... And God will sovereignly laugh in the face of our suppositions that if we could have had our political agendas served, we would have had automatic godliness. God may wind up blessing the nation more through Clinton than he might have through some of our evangelical-right propositions....I don't think Jesus called us to rub salt in the world's wounds, or to flare the light a foot from their eyes with a million-candlepower spotlight. He called us to be the warm glow of his love, and the flavoring quality of his nature. That way we can carry out our ministries as believers in society and intercessors for those who lead it. God has not called me to be morally indignant. He's called me to be spiritually vibrant.

—*Jack Hayford in an interview with* National and International Religion Report

True freedom is freedom to be my true self, as God made me and meant me to be. And God made me for loving. But loving is giving, self-giving. Therefore, in order to be myself, I have to deny myself and give myself. In order to be free, I have to serve. In order to live, I have to die to my own self-centeredness. In order to find myself, I have to lose myself in loving.

True freedom is, then, the exact opposite of of what many people think. It is not freedom from all responsibility to God and others, in order to live for myself. That is bondage to my own self-centeredness. Instead true freedom is freedom from my silly little self, in order to live responsibly in love for God and others.

—*John R.W. Stott in* The Contemporary Christian

To Americans...tragedy is wanting something very badly and not getting it. Many people have had to learn in their private lives, and nations have had to learn in their historical experience, that perhaps the worst form of tragedy is wanting something badly, getting it, and finding it empty.

—*Henry Kissinger*

Even when we are seeking God, but doing so out of a duplicitious motivation, though our words and deeds may seem virtuous we will be double-minded at best. No, Kierkegaard makes it clear; our inward disposition must be centered, focused, synoptic if we want to know that purity of heart that is Christian simplicity.

—*Richard Foster*

Always beware of an estimate of life which does not recognize the fact that there is sin....You are never safe with an innocent man or woman.

—*Oswald Chambers*

The kingdom of God is not defined by programs, curriculum, video libraries, creative clip-art, or any other ministry tool. The kingdom—God's rule and reign in the lives of his people—is a matter of spiritual power. God's work in people's lives is not merely enhanced human endeavor. It is the supernatural work of a supernatural God invading the natural world of our lives.

—*Dann Spader in* Growing a Healthy Church

Most of us want God, but we do not want to go through the "work" of the relationship of real love. We want it easy. We want it fast. But real work must be done before the perfection of a real love relationship with God can be experienced.

—*John Michael Talbot in* The Master Musician

If Jesus appeared at your dining room table tonight with knowledge of everything you are and are not, total comprehension of your life story and every skeleton hidden in your closet; if he laid out the real slate of your discipleship with the hidden agenda, the mixed motives, and the dark desires buried in your psyche, you would feel his acceptance and forgiveness.

—*Brandon Manning in* The Ragamuffin Gospel

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Advent Christian

WITNESS

June 1993

Recovery Groups

Why the need?

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Features

Recovery Groups: Why the Need? 4

Recovery/support groups are a growing ministry trend designed to help people deal with compulsive addictions, behaviors, and habits. Gary Bailey discusses how these groups enable lives to be touched for Jesus Christ.

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Recovery Groups: A New Openness in Local Churches 7

In this interview with Alice Brown, she discusses why recovery groups are an essential part of the ministry at Emmanuel Church in Rochester, New Hampshire.

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In this brief devotional, Roy Morrison challenges us to move beyond divided loyalties and to serve God on his terms.

Heading for Civil War? Religious Freedom Suffers in India 10

The recent Hindu-Muslim clashes have led to increased hatred, violence, and thousands of deaths. Are Christians in India the next target?

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On the Cover

Support groups provide an exciting opportunity to minister to the hurts and struggles people face in our complex society.

photos by Jim Whitmer

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Call Them As You See Them

LAST FALL, they celebrated the twentieth anniversary of what I think is the greatest play ever in pro football. If you're a Pittsburgh Steelers or an Oakland Raiders fan (yes, I know they've moved to L.A. but the real Raiders were the *Oakland* Raiders), you know the play I mean: Franco Harris catching a deflected desperation fourth-down pass and racing into the end zone to turn certain defeat into a playoff victory for the Steelers. That miracle play even has a religious sounding moniker, the "Immaculate Reception."

But what I remember most about that play was the response of the officials. Never before had anything like this happened. The head linesman immediately ran off the field, into the dugout, and got on the phone. The officials then huddled for what seemed like an eternity. Chuck Noll and John Madden, the two coaches, watched with a helpless feeling. Finally, the head official signaled "touchdown!"

Judgment calls

Referees face an almost impossible challenge in officiating sporting events today. The players have become more athletic. The action moves at such a rapid pace. Game rules demand judgment calls, especially on close and controversial plays. Television screens replay the action in slow motion an instant after it happens. And players, coaches, and fans expect perfection. Referees and umpires spend hours learning the rules and evaluating their previous performances. But despite all the training, when game time comes the officials must go out and call the plays as they see them.

Editorial writing is a lot officiating, especially in our culture. Events move at such a fast pace. New issues come to the forefront. Circumstances that look so clear at one moment can dramatically change within weeks. Moral and ethical dilemmas collide into each other and grow more complex. Like officials, editorial writers have to tackle controversy and call them as they see them with the best information they have at the time.

Getting you to think

What is an editorial? It's simply an opinion about an important issue or topic hopefully based on relevant facts and good reasoning. Good editorials do two things. They get readers to stretch their thinking and form their own convictions about a topic. And they attempt to motivate readers to put those convictions into action. In Christian publications, editors go even further by attempting to bring the truth of the Scriptures to bear on the issues and topics they address.

My goal is not to have you always agree with what I write—it's to get you to think about issues and draw your own conclusions. I don't want you to always agree with me. I'm fallible and my reasoning can be faulty. And in the weeks between the time I write and the time you read what I've written, events can change. What I do hope is that when you read this column, your thinking will be stretched and you'll be challenged to search the Scriptures, draw your own conclusions, and act upon them. If your conclusions are different from mine, that's no problem.

I occasionally come across folks who agree with everything they read or hear from a particu-

continued on page 18

Follow Up

I'm not surprised. The April and May editorials on homosexuality have generated a variety of written responses and dialogue. The Clinton adminstration's proposal to lift the ban against homosexuals serving in the U.S. Armed Forces has put homosexuality and issues related to it on the front burner of political, moral, and ethical discussion in the United States. Now more than ever, Christians must clearly articulate what the Scriptures teach and communicate the gospel with the same passion and compassion that Jesus did.

Since the first editorial was published, the three Marines accused of assaulting Crae Pridgen were found not guilty by a judge in Wilmington, N.C. Serious doubt was raised about what actually happened between the three soldiers and Mr. Pridgen and the judge's verdict was just given the testimony. As the incident now becomes the subject of a military investigation and a civil lawsuit, may I suggest to Mr. Pridgen that he needs to be completely honest about his role in what happened that night. Half-truths and publicity seeking won't make it in a court of law.

But more than that, my prayer and hope is that God will lead some believer to befriend Crae Pridgen and share the good news of God's love for him. He needs to hear that Jesus Christ died for him so that he might find forgiveness for his sin, a fresh relationship with his Creator, and the hope of eternal life in God's coming kingdom. I hope you'll join me in that prayer.

RECOVERY GROUPS

Why the Need?

Gary Bailey
Rochester, N.H.

AT SOME time almost every Christian's life has reflected Paul's lament in Romans 7; "What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." The war between our spiritual and natural natures is ongoing.

At the same time, we are reminded by Scripture that the true believer doesn't walk in continuous sin. What then of the Christian who cannot seem to gain permanent victory over compulsive behaviors, habits, or addictions? Is there hope or help?

The most recent answer in terms of ministry programs is the recovery/support group. Christians come together in a safe environment to hold each other accountable yet accept each other wherever they are in their pilgrimage. In the group, believers are able to explore the roots of their patterns and find others who are now further along the path of healing. At Emmanuel Advent Christian Church in Rochester, we are finding that the recovery/support group is a valuable tool for renewal and revival.

Why haven't traditional Bible studies or small groups in the church been able to meet these needs? I have been in traditional and recovery groups both as a participant and leader, and I have some opinions on the subject. I have tried to observe as both a simple believer and as a church growth consultant.

1. The traditional Bible study or small group in the church has been mainly social in its purpose. Not that small groups do not study the Bible, pray, and perform other significant spiritual services. They do. But small groups have functioned as a place to

invite neighbors—another "door" into the church, or as a way to involve marginal members more deeply in the life of the church, or as a means of fellowship. These are excellent reasons to exist, but they are social in orientation.

A person with a life-destroying habit or a life-long hurt will find these gatherings pleasant and will find spiritual help. After all it is the Word of God applied by the Spirit of God that changes lives. But he is not likely to find deliverance in the group. As a matter of fact, he is not likely to reveal his true hurt in such a context. In a typical small group when prayer requests are taken, they are invariably requests for physical healings (large and small), and general problems that are politely public in nature.

This is also fine and meets a real need. Yet never once in 20 years of ministry did I ever hear anyone say, "I am in bondage to lust"; "I was a victim of incest and my life has been a constant hell since"; or "I am an alcoholic and am thinking about taking my own life" in any of those meetings. The difference between a small group and a recovery/support group is the difference between a social gathering and a business meeting. The recovery group is there to do hard business, and tough issues are simply its stock in trade.

2. Another difference is that most small church groups are heterogeneous, made up of people with differing backgrounds and needs. A recovery group is more homogeneous. In this group we can look around and say, "We are here with others like us. These people understand my hurts because they have been where I am now." In the group Gale and I lead for those who have been through grief and loss, our tears are not an embarrassment to those present. They are simply a fact of life as we go through the act of supporting others who have lost spouses, children, careers, dreams, suffer incapacitating illnesses, or face the real possibility of death tomorrow.

Both accepting and demanding

3. A recovery/support group deals with issues in a more direct and open way than the traditional Bible study. Part of our training surely is to support and accept, but it also excludes tolerating blameshifting, excuses, or trying to fix anyone or anything but myself. You are apt to have a sobering truth encounter in a recovery group. I believe that the church sees such poor results in terms of Christian character change because there are few places a member can go to confess his deepest sin or need and survive as a part of that fellowship. (This is doubly true of pastors and other church leaders.) The paradox of the Christian recovery group is that it is both accepting and demanding.

4. One last difference is crucial. The traditional Bible study or small group in the church is church-oriented. It functions as if we live in a Christian culture where people are uniformly "normal," meaning basically well-adjusted and with enough background in the Scripture to know what we are talking about. The real world in Canada and the United States today is vastly different. Broken homes are the rule rather than the exception. Single parents are common. Dysfunctional families have left generations who do not know how to parent their children or partner their spouses.

We are confronting powerful spiritual warfare every day. I myself

Support Groups at Emmanuel Church

Overcomers Outreach

This is a twelve-step group for any individual or family member struggling with any addictive-compulsive and/or dysfunctional behavior. It meets every Tuesday without exception at 7:30 - 9:00 pm in the fellowship hall.

Support Group for Grief and Loss

This group is for anyone experiencing any kind of loss, whether the death of someone, divorce or separation or unfaithfulness, job or financial security, physical health, chronic illness, or other. It meets the first and third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Support Group for Women

This group is for any woman who is an incest survivor or has been emotionally, physically, or sexually abused or molested. It meets every Thursday at 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. in the conference room downstairs.

Support Group for Single Parents

This group is for any single parent who wants to encourage and support other single parents and gain insights into how to more effectively meet their needs and the needs of their children. It meets the second and fourth Monday of each month 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. in the conference room downstairs.

Support Group for Couples

This is a marriage renewal support group for both couples in crisis and couples who want to make a good marriage better. Whether newly married, parents of young children, an empty nest (or we're back!), a blended family, or other, all are welcome. It meets the first and third Monday of each month in the conference room downstairs at 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

I've Experienced God's Peace

My name is J, and today I am a vibrant, joyful Christian. I am also a survivor of rape, physical and emotional abuse, co-dependence, divorce, and a suicide attempt.

It was in a twelve-step program that I learned to trust God and how to have a personal relationship with him.

I came back to church because I wanted to know more about Jesus. I wondered how Christians grew spiritually through their struggles with compulsive behavior without specific tools for recovery. What I discovered was that many were not recovering. The fear of being labeled a failure in their walk with Jesus kept them behind the prison walls of denial.

Through the encouragement of our pastor and others, I started an Overcomers Outreach. Overcomers is a twelve-step Christian-centered fellowship of men and women who have been directly or indirectly affected by the abuse of any mood-altering chemical or compulsive behavior such as co-dependency, food, sex, or smoking.

I cannot possibly explain the comfort and peace I felt that first night as we started reading about these steps to recovery from God's Word. Tears filled my eyes as I realized that this program that had saved my life, helped me recover, and led me to Christ, had come directly from the Lord through the Scriptures. The new realization that Jesus had been right there with me through all I had done and suffered was overwhelming. I have seen many others in traditional twelve-step groups have the same reaction at their first meeting.

One of the wonderful benefits of Overcomers is being free to identify and freely talk about my "higher power," Jesus Christ, without giving offense to anyone. As I have shared him with others, I have been comforted, strengthened, and have grown. The Lord has also honored this witness by continuing the healing process in my heart and life, giving me a new sense of joy and purpose.

I shall be eternally grateful to twelve-step programs like Overcomers Outreach for teaching me how to walk one day at a time with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through the victory that overcomes the world...love, J.

needed prayer recently for healing of physical symptoms which resulted directly, I firmly believe, from entering a spiritual battle of prayer for some young people who are being "demonized." Being in a spiritual battle means that there are occasional casualties. But on the whole being involved with recovery/support groups seems to me far more like the New Testament image I always had of living life on the front lines of the Spirit.

Yes, sometimes the terminology I hear in recovery/support group circles is a little disconcerting. I still get uneasy when I hear someone call God his "higher power." But I'm coming to realize that it is only a term to bridge the gap into the world of the lost and hurting. I think Paul did the same thing in Athens when he told the pagans that their "unknown god" was none other than Jesus Christ.

The Bible study and small-group movement in our churches is not a failure. It meets many important needs. But for those who dare or who are driven by the hurt and bondage around them, the recovery/support group ministry may be a new avenue for the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ. ❑

Gary Bailey lives in Rochester, N.H., with his wife Gale and his daughter Karen. He's teaching at Learning Skills Academy, a private high school for the learning disabled. He also writes and does church growth consulting work.

A Song in My Heart

There's a song in my heart
Thank you Jesus is the way it starts.
For the blessings of yesterday
And your love I feel today.

Ask and you shall receive
God's Word and I do believe.
Seek and you shall find
Has proven true time after time.

For each new day life brings
His praises I will sing.
I'll sing my song again and again
Thank you Jesus is the way it ends.
—Naomi Haigler—
Midland, N.C.

A New Openness in Local Churches

Alice Brown, former Advent Christian missionary to the Philippines, now directs the Counseling Center at Emmanuel Advent Christian Church in Rochester, New Hampshire. Gary Bailey interviewed Alice about her ministry through recovery groups and their benefit in the lives of people.

Pastor Alice, "recovery" sounds like a medical term. What does it mean in terms of Christian recovery and restoration?

"Recovery" is the process of moving from physical, spiritual, or emotional illness and dysfunction to a state of well-being.

It's true that many Christians have resisted using the term because it was introduced by secular support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon. We have found it to be useful, being understood by so many who have accepted Christ as their "higher power." These folks are moving from those organizations into our Overcomers 12-step support group.

Exactly what is recovery-group ministry?

We seem to deal with issues on two levels. First, there is the level of habits, life patterns, and compulsions that rule people's behavior. These can be anything from alcohol or other substance abuse to sexual addictions. In a Christian recovery group we share our salvation and affirm that Jesus Christ has provided everything we need for recovery and victory. It is simply that we have not learned to appropriate what Christ has done. There are some parallels between physical and spiritual/emotional recovery. As a body can become ill and recover health, so a Christian can have sin problems and need healing. A Christian group offers both support and accountability during this process.

The second level focuses on issues of a wounded spirit. We deal extensively with rebellion, unforgiveness, the results of participating in occult activity, guilt, and destroyed self-image.

At each level we try to learn the truths of who we are in Christ. We need to teach Christians what their spiritual resources are and how to use them. Essentially we are describing the process of sanctification, and that it is necessary to bring these issues to Christ for healing and holiness.

Do many Christians need recovery/support groups?

Using our definition of recovery, everyone is at some state of need.

If we do not share the love of Jesus with people who are in the midst of the hurt of their sin, failure, or need, then why are we here?

Consider the hurts recovery groups handle at Emmanuel Church: grief and loss; women who have suffered physical, emotional or sexual abuse; marriage relationships; single parents; Overcomers (alcohol and substance abuse, compulsions, and addictions). Remember, 50% of first marriages in our culture end in divorce.

A sign of the severity of the need is that in addition to my responsibility in equipping Christians for peer counseling and support group leadership, I spend three days a week counseling. We have six pastors, each carrying part of the counseling load.

Where do you find all the people who join recovery and support groups at Emmanuel?

They come through natural networks and webs of influence. Friends bring friends to group meetings, or to church, or set up an appointment with a pastor. At Emmanuel, people may find Christ through Pastor Dick or myself in a counseling session, but they were prepared often in support groups.

There are a lot of issues that need to be dealt with when people first come to Christ. If not, these issues may fester and cause the believer to be dysfunctional in life and as a witness. And people are becoming more honest and transparent. They expect issues to be dealt with upon repentance and confession.

Our advertising in the community also includes our group ministry. Hospitals, community agencies, and doctors are recognizing that we have valid help to offer, and we are beginning to get referrals. And of course we do get calls from other churches. Believers in other fellowships may have to get away and deal with issues anonymously or risk losing their place in that church.

Also, as our Overcomers Group serves as a bridge from secular twelve-step programs into the church, so it is a bridge from our church back into those programs to reach people for Christ.

What has been the real value of recovery and support groups at Emmanuel?

Authenticity would be one. Those who come to a recovery/support group find people there who have lived similar pilgrimages and have seen progress in Christ. Those who found Christ in AA and come to church didn't find church groups as honest and issue-oriented as those on the outside. Here that has changed.

What is the bottom-line issue here?

In my opinion, the bottom line is that the church needs to be on the forefront of meeting real needs. If we do not share the love of Jesus with people who are in the midst of the hurt of their sin, failure, or need; why are we here? We exist as a ministry to apply biblical principles to unresolved issues and struggles, whether those issues exist in the lives of believers or unbelievers.

We are going to continue to create recovery/support groups at Emmanuel in which to do this. Perhaps divorce recovery or a group for hurting children and teens will be next. When we advertise the formation of a new group, we get calls asking for times and locations before the group has even had a chance to get off the ground.

The theme verse for our group leaders is from 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." ❑

SERVING GOD
What's Our Attitude?

Roy Morrison
Olustee, Fla.

DOES GOD allow himself to be used by men? Can we actually "take advantage" of the Creator of the universe? Is it possible to "put God on the shelf" until such a time as we need him?

Some of us seem to think we have a God of convenience—a God who will do *our* bidding at *our* command within *our* timetable. I thought that for many years. After my initial conversion in 1964, I soon saw my euphoria fade because God didn't bend to my way of seeing things. Within a few years I was putting "God on the shelf" so I could partake in the pleasures of this world for a season. I figured that I'd get back *right* when it was more convenient. Backsliding, then repenting, became a convenient way of living. When life was going down the tubes, I'd ride it out just long enough to come to my rope's end, then run to the altar, cry those tears and confess, "I need you, Lord!" Then I'd go back to a double life. On the surface, I'd attend church, use the right lingo, get involved in special programs, and "play the role." Deep within me, I was drawn to undercover sin (the little foxes that spoil the vine), and the fight in my soul raged. Slowly, I'd slip back into worldly pleasure.

> *Is it possible to "put God on the shelf" until such a time as we need him?*

Thankfully, Psalm 103:8 is valid: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." Yet, God has his limits when it comes to dealing with the sin in our lives. Peter speaks of God's waiting patiently while Noah was building the ark, yet, when the time ran out, his wrath fell (I Peter 3:20).

Like me, too many Christians have one foot in the church and one foot in the world. But, the Scriptures teach that we cannot serve both God and the world. We may try to, but soon we will feel the pull of each and a yearning for one over the other prevails. As that yearning for one increases, a distaste for the other develops. That distaste increases into hatred. The love of the world takes over and that hatred for God and the Christian life builds to the point of no return (Matthew 6:24).

Serving God on his terms

I think many of us try to work out the path of our lives without looking to God for direction. We do that until we run into trouble. Then we run to him, cry and wallow in self-pity, and ask him to intervene. Are we "using" God as a crutch in such circumstances? It may seem so, but I've experienced what finally takes place when God says, "That's it! You've run your course. Now, I'm going to straighten you out." Ouch! When that happens, and the correction of Hebrews 12 is instituted, the pain of playing games with God takes on a different light.

Joshua 1:8 & 9 tells us how we must live as godly children. Take in these words: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Certainly we wouldn't be making God into a God of convenience if we would follow this single admonition. As we believe that God is in full control of our lives, and we give Him praise for *everything* that happens to us, we will then serve him on his terms, not for the sake of our convenience. ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor Roy Morrison serves as chaplain at Baker Correctional Institution in Olustee, Fla.

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO BY QAISER MIRZA, APRIL 23, 1993

HEADING FOR CIVIL WAR?

Valson Thampu
New Delhi, India

A HINDU fundamentalist slogan in the north Indian city of Ayodhya proclaimed: "If the blood of a Hindu does not boil, it is not blood but water." Last December, Hindu blood boiled over when some 200,000 frenzied devotees tore down the Babri Masjid, a 450-year-old Muslim mosque.

A vicious anti-Muslim propaganda campaign had persuaded them that this mosque stood exactly where their god, Lord Ram, was born some 900,000 years ago; that Babar, the Muslim invader, had destroyed the sacred temple to make room for this mosque in 1528; that the mosque symbolized the humiliation of Hindus. Taking in the symbolism of the sun setting over the debris of the destroyed mosque, a Hindu priest pronounced: "The sun sets on Babar and his heirs at last!"

A nation's shame

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao observed shortly thereafter that the attack was "an act of utter perfidy." *India Today*, the leading Indian news magazine, called it "a nation's shame." India's President Shankar Dayal Sharma appealed to his government to "initiate appropriate expeditious steps to uphold the rule of law." Jama Masjid, the Muslim Imam of Delhi, concluded: "The country is heading for civil war."

But the metaphor of war is irrelevant in light of the tragic reality. Millions of defenseless Muslims in Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad, Calcutta and other cities were suddenly overtaken by murder and mayhem, loot and rape, arson and extortion. Police

There are enough indications that the day of reckoning is not far for Christians.

either connived or actively colluded with marauders in spreading death and terror. On the pretext of quelling riots the police ran amuck and felled hundreds of people.

Day after day the toll mounted. The first week of violence alone left 1,100 people dead, 4,000 wounded and thousands homeless. The cosmopolitan city of Bombay was the worst hit: 550 dead, and 1,200 wounded. Some 50,000 Muslim families fled the city in fear. For weeks the carnage continued. Throughout India, Hindus and Muslims were sharply polarized.

Baba Amte, India's renowned social activist, noted, "Ayodhya signals the balkanization not only of the country, but also of the very heart and minds of the people," (*Times of India*, January 19).

Hindu revivalists have notified the nation that the Ayodhya holocaust is, in their game plan, only a step toward a much larger goal. That goal is the total "integration and assimilation" of minorities into the Hindu mainstream. The minorities will be forced to surrender their cultural identities and religious freedom, and be shaped at will by the majority community. Such was the message which emerged from the Dahram Sansad (the Hindu religious parliament) when it met in Allahabad, January 24.

The national daily *Pioneer* reported January 25 that the Sansad formulated a "code of conduct" that the riot-displaced Muslims of Ayodhya will have to comply with if they are allowed to return home.

The same message was driven home with chilling clarity by the leader of the Bhratiya Janata Party, L.K. Advani. In a January statement published in *Panchajanya*, a local revivalist publication, Advani urged minorities to regard themselves as "Mohammedi Hindus" and "Christian Hindus," respectively. "I do not believe," he wrote, "in forcing people," but there would be "no riots if minorities voluntarily accepted this." Advani is viewed as a moderate among the revivalists.

Are Christians next?

The fire and brimstone of Hindu revivalism has not yet rained on the Indian Christian community. "Pahle Kassai, phir Issai" (first the Muslims, next the Christians) is one of the slogans making the rounds. There are enough indications that the day of reckoning is not far for Christians.

One such pointer is the calculated ideological offensive being launched by a section of the Hindu intelligentsia. They rationalize the current phase of militant Hindu revivalism as a fallout of the "psychological trauma" that the British Raj and their religious agents, the Christian missionaries, inflicted on Hindus. Muslims now, and the Christians later, must pay, they imply, for the denigration of Hinduism perpetrated by missionaries over the past two centuries. Hinduism is then held out as the ideal and tolerant faith because it is free from the "missionary virus."

This pseudo-analytical argument is calculated to equate the work of the missionaries as taboo, to be voluntarily shunned by all broad-minded and civilized people. The truth, ironically, is that Hinduism is infinitely poorer for want of a missionary concern born out of one's love for one's neighbor. Such reaching out in love can only be alien to a caste-based inner-worldly apathetic religion, of which the social and spiritual consequence is there for all to see.

Be that as it may, the present anti-mission Hindu ideology might well pave the way for the transition from the present sporadic to an organized, institutionalized harassment of missionaries in the days ahead.

It is not farfetched to infer that the Hindu fundamentalists have clearly singled out the Muslims, the largest minority group in India, as an object lesson to all minorities. ❑

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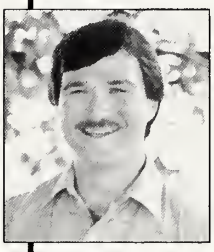
Religious Freedom Suffers in India

Disciple Maker



Clayton Blackstone

DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE IN SEVENTY-TWO HOURS OR LESS

EACH WEEK, studio producers for ESPN Sports Center select ten "Plays of the Week." Ten highlights described with glowing adjectives such as "amazing," "remarkable," "sensational," and even "impossible."

An errant pass heads towards the near sidelines certain to be marked out of bounds near the top of the key, nearly forty feet from the basket. You sit innocently watching from three rows up in the bleachers. Close enough to the spot to feel the heat given off by the heavily lathered body of the player assigned to inbound the ball. Time blurs. Only the magic of video tape, slow motion and instant replay preserve the moment. You see him coming. Feel yourself instinctively sliding to the right to avoid this speeding bullet intent on keeping the round orange ball in play. Brace yourself for impact. You watch as his feet leave the ground inches from the sidelines. He stretches out his arm and flings the basketball over his right shoulder. The crowd erupts. Somehow the small sphere thirty inches in circumference banks into the eighteen-inch diameter hoop.

Amazing. Remarkable. Sensational. But impossible? Not quite.

Not a chance

The word means like it sounds. Im: not. Possible: doable. Webster adds a bit of polish to the definition. "Incapable of occurring. Utterly hopeless. Without chance."

At first glance, lots of things appear impossible. A job assignment. Remaining happily married. Raising a teenager. Enduring your parents. Paying the mountain of bills accumulating on your desk. Continuing to function in the face of a debilitating illness. Forgiving someone you once considered your best friend. Learning a new skill.

But somehow, you manage. God's grace proves sufficient. The person isn't as bad as you once thought. A mentor carefully explains the assignment. A master teacher opens your eyes to the subject in a way that made it live. You discover a human side to your parents. For once, you listen rather than yell at your child. Renewed discipline and understanding creditors allow you to see the light at the end of the financial tunnel.

Still, impossible accurately describes several realities in my life. At five feet, eight inches in height and on the wiser side of forty, I will never be able to dunk a basketball (unless I do it from a step ladder!) I can't cross the Snake River with a flying leap. The absence of a photographic mind prevents me from remembering more than a fraction of what I read. And I didn't emerge from my mother's womb designed to live forever.

Some things *are* impossible. That's just the way it is. . . to everyone but Jesus.

Messing with the wrong dude

Two and a half to three million visitors crowded the streets of Jerusalem for Passover, a festive celebration of deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Two and a half million visitors and Jesus, who began his public ministry in a most unexpected fashion. When he arrived in the temple courts, he discovered men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables converting money into accepted currency at a twelve and a half per cent exchange rate.

It probably evolved quite innocently. Two and a half to three million out-of-towners could not be expected

Warm Up: John 2:12-22

to bring the necessary sacrificial animals with them. Travel in those days was difficult enough without complicating the journey with livestock.

And then there was the required temple tax. A half shekel per male nineteen years and older. A half shekel of Tyrian mint, none other accepted. The reason for the refusal to accept other currencies appears to hinge on the fact that one could never be quite certain whether other coins contained the promised amount of gold or silver. Tyrians minted their money under the strictest conditions to preserve its impeccable reputation.

The traders of animals and coins offered a much needed service in a convenient location—the court of the Gentiles, just inside the temple proper. A busy bazaar in the confines of the house of worship. But holy indignation against the practice spelled trouble in River City.

Jesus fashioned a whip from cords and drove the livestock from the courtyard. He sent the coins of the money changers flying as he flipped their tables. He ordered the sellers of doves from the premises, demanding to know how they dared turn his Father's house into a market. Thousands of cows and sheep bottle-necked at the temple gates then scattered into the streets of Jerusalem. Money changers bent to their knees frantically picking up their coins. The crowds dispersing to avoid the stampeding animals made for mayhem at its worst.

Prove it!

The inner confusion in people's minds matched the chaos of this messianic moment. Jewish people expected the promised Christ to act this way. As his disciples watched their teacher at his Father's business, they recalled a psalm frequently read in anticipation of the coming One. "Zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me."

What did the guilty see that made them wither in the face of his authority? They could have resisted. Perhaps his penetrating glare signaled that they'd better not mess with righteous anger. Or maybe he touched a raw nerve. They knew he was right. They shouldn't have been there, but no one had ever challenged them before. They left, apparently without resistance.

He stood perspiring, task completed as irate religious leaders faced him with their demand. "A sign. Give us a sign. If you're going to act like Messiah, prove it."

What did they expect? Which miracle would transform their skepticism into belief? Water into wine? A walk on the Sea of Galilee? A blind man's darkness turned to light? A lame man winning a marathon? Several thousand fed with five pieces of bread and a couple of pieces of dried fish? Answer: none of the above, and he knew it.

"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again within the space of three days."

They stood in the temple complex. A sprawling structure. A wonder of the world. A monument to Herod. Already forty-six years in the making with another forty-one to go before one could ever call the building project complete.

Impossible. Not just unlikely, amazing, astounding, remarkable, or sensational. It was flat out impossible. Not doable. Not even Messiah could engineer such an unthinkable feat.

John clarifies. Jesus was speaking about his body. After his resurrection from the dead, the disciples recalled this promise. Nobody got it until then. Nobody.

In the end, he delivered on his promise. Within seventy-two hours of his crucifixion, he emerged from the tomb. In one dramatic display of power, God made the impossible possible, but they still didn't believe.

As the rats race on

At first glance, one wonders about application. What are the personal implications when confronted with the one who does the impossible in seventy-two hours or less? Perhaps it's a warning about selling things in the church building. Or maybe it's a thinly veiled warning to those always hoping for another miracle to authenticate their faith.

Perhaps, but I think not. We find two different words translated temple in the text. One refers to the temple complex, the buildings in general. But when Jesus made the transition from building to body he employs another word: sanctuary. The place where God dwells.

Commentators frequently make a big deal about the profiteering going on in the courtyard of the Gentiles. Exorbitant exchange rates. Trumped up quality-control inspections. Price gouging. But Jesus didn't turn merchants out on their ears because they were crooked. He banned them from the temple because they were there. Gentiles came there to pray. To worship. To encounter the living God of Israel. Instead they found the noise of the bazaar. Vendors hawking their wares. Haggling over a price. A circus instead of a sanctuary.

Our bodies—a sanctuary. And we fill this hallowed place with continual

continued on page 18

> ...So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.
> ...Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"
> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."
>
> NIV

Women's Ministries

Missionaries
Rigney
Japan
White
Perez
India
World
Furlough
Jesus
Foreign
Arnold
Warriner
Helms
Patterson
Damon
Bible
Vignali
Ssebikindu
Gospel
Angulo
Cleon

Donna Hett
New Albany, Ind.

Mission Word Search

Term
Brown
Vannah
Witness
Preach
Gomez
Serrato
Mexico
Philippines
Teach
Nation
Lay
Powers
Kampenhout
Hollis
Akpan
Idols
God
Malaysia

N	A	H	H	E	L	M	S	P	N	A	P	A	J
O	I	A	J	W	H	I	T	E	I	G	O	D	S
S	D	N	A	O	U	S	E	R	R	A	T	O	E
R	N	N	F	R	T	S	L	O	D	I	U	H	N
E	I	A	T	L	V	I	G	N	A	L	I	G	I
T	M	V	P	D	N	O	Q	P	W	X	B	U	P
T	R	B	R	O	W	N	Z	A	B	H	T	O	P
A	E	C	E	F	G	A	R	N	O	L	D	L	I
P	T	E	A	C	H	R	N	A	P	K	A	R	L
S	M	H	C	J	I	I	M	K	D	S	M	U	I
S	A	T	H	N	W	E	L	A	Y	S	O	F	H
E	L	J	E	S	U	S	Z	M	B	N	N	O	P
B	A	R	I	G	N	E	Y	P	O	W	E	R	S
I	Y	N	H	O	M	Y	D	E	G	O	M	E	Z
K	S	O	O	S	E	F	L	N	L	J	K	I	E
I	I	I	L	P	X	C	X	H	Z	B	L	G	R
N	A	T	L	E	I	L	H	O	R	R	I	N	E
D	Z	A	I	L	C	O	L	U	G	N	A	B	P
U	D	N	S	B	O	W	I	T	N	E	S	S	T

Donna Hett and her husband Bob serve the New Albany, Indiana, Advent Christian Church.

CAN YOU find the mission related words, names, and places on the grid? Each has something to do with Advent Christian missions—places where we serve and missionaries past and present. Here's a fun way to learn more about Advent Christian World Missions. Look up and down, left and right and circle the words as you identify them. We'll publish the answers in the next issue.

My Pilgrimage

Hurt by Hurt

Linda Leavitt

THE FRIGHTENED six-year-old sat huddled in the corner of the woodshed connected to the kitchen. No matter how hard she tried to block out the noise, the sounds of daddy hurting mommy were ever present. The smells of the woodshed, the small ants scurrying here and there, the terrible, haunting sense of fear and loneliness, and the feeling of the cold, damp air that settled, not only over her small frame, but over her spirit, are memories and wounds as fresh and real today as they were some thirty-seven years ago. The hours passed. Daddy finally went to sleep. And the alcohol wore off. Finding her way back to bed, the little girl once more heard those words from mommy, assuring her that daddy was sorry and would never do it again. He was just very sick.

At that moment, that little girl made a choice to turn her back on the only true source that could save, protect, and heal her hurts and wounds. She did not know who God was, but if he were real, and he had allowed her to go through so much hurt, she wasn't sure she wanted any part of him. A childhood of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse transformed a wounded little girl into a bitter adult. Many other painful events passed, but the choice that little girl made that night in the woodshed did not. She continued to believe there was no God, or if he were real, then she must have been really "bad" for him to have punished her so much.

At the age of twenty-seven, this same little girl met Jesus face to face. If she had only known who he was, known that he was the source all sufficient for even the most difficult wounds and memories, she might have been spared years of loneliness and torment.

These wounds weren't removed all at once. I know, for I was that little girl. The pain is in the process of being healed, one hurt at a time. The hurts and fears did not happen overnight, and the healing hasn't taken place overnight.

Jesus is acquainted with our sorrows and grief. Isaiah 53:3 tells us, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrow, and familiar with suffering." Whatever problems or sorrows we have in life, we can be assured our Savior is familiar with them and understands our deepest needs. If you have wounds and scars in your life, may I assure you, Jesus cares. Turn towards the Savior, not away from him. And be patient, too, as all good work takes time! ❑

With this issue, we welcome Linda Leavitt as a regular columnist to our Women's Ministries pages. Linda's work will appear every other month and will focus on concerns and issues women (and men) face in living today. Linda and her husband, Pastor Nolan Leavitt, are currently planting a new Advent Christian church in the metro-Charlotte area.

TESTIMONY

The Young Man Who Received Deliverance

M.R. Sunder Manuel

SOMETIME BACK at a three-day Church meeting something unusual happened.

As the first day's meeting began a young man came and sat down. Because he was new, everyone noticed him. The singing began. The young man watched what everyone else did, and did it too. The singers' group announced that people could buy songbooks for two rupees. Immediately the young man came to me and said, "I don't have any money. I'll give it tomorrow." I gave him a songbook. He put it in his pocket, and looked at the book of his neighbor! So the first evening's meeting ended.

The second day's meeting began. The same young man came and sat down. Though he had said he would give the money, he didn't do so. They began to sing and the young man snatched a songbook from someone near him. When the message began, he got up and left.

The final day's meeting began, and the same young man came again. At first, he didn't come inside. When the singing began, the young man began to dance. As they continued singing, he danced more energetically and came inside. The singers stopped singing, and began to pray. He fell to the ground and lay there quietly. When they prayed for him, the demons inside of him came out.

Afterwards that young man went to the pastor and asked for baptism. He gave the money for the songbook he had taken on the first day. He received Jesus Christ as his own Savior, was baptized, and now lives a happy Christian life. ❑

Missions Watch

David McCarthy

Tesheras Serving in Philippines

Ruth Soucier (Japan): Ruth reports that the English language classes for children and adults are going well. She is developing a few deeper relationships with students and is able to share some information about her Christian faith in natural conversation. Some of Ruth's students have expressed an interest in coming to the United States this summer to visit Christian camps. Things are still in the planning stages, but the idea is creating excitement. She asks prayer that this may be a growing time spiritually for all who make the trip.

Prayer Pointer: Remember Ruth's contacts in the English language classes. Pray that students will recognize Christ in her life and raise questions about her faith.

Beryl Joy Hollis (India): With Marion Damon and Barbara White in the United States for a few weeks, Joy served temporarily as superintendent, secretary, and treasurer of the Mission. Retreats and rallies for various groups are being held in many of our churches at this season, and Joy has filled a variety of pastoral functions. In one situation, she counseled and offered practical help to a man who had been put out of his home after professing faith in Christ. He lost his job and fell into serious depression, but thanks to Joy and the aid of believers, the man is situated in another position and growing in the Lord.

Prayer Pointers: Pray for several congregations that are trying to find property and build, and for Vacation Bible Schools currently in session.

George and Beverly Teshera (Philippines): With David Vignali home to serve as General Conference coordinator, the Tesheras have been taking over some of his responsibilities. George has preached a number of times and Beverly is teaching at Oro Bible College three days each week. She also has the opportunity to lead a group of non-Christian students in an English language class.

Prayer Pointer: For increased attendance at Oro Bible College.

Austin and Dorothy Warriner (Japan): After a productive term of service in the Philippines, the Warriners will soon be back in Japan. They stopped to visit Advent Christian works in India and Malaysia enroute. In their final weeks in the Philippines, they talked with Mr. Sitoy, now 77 years of age. He was the first national Christian to work with the Toothes when they established our work in the Islands in the 1950s.

Prayer Pointer: For safety as they travel, and their resuming activities on the Japan field. ❑

Japanese Advent Christian pastors and church leaders meet together at the annual Japan conference meeting. Austin Warriner and Steve Lay are in the back row.

TESTIMONY

The Young Man Who Fulfilled His Vow

M.R. Sunder Manuel

I'M FROM OLD PALLAVARAM in Madras, India, where I was raised by parents who brought me up in the Christian way.

When I was twelve years old, I suffered unbearable physical pain with sores all over my body. Because of that pain, I could not even bear to put on my clothes. Though I took many different medicines, I did not get better.

Seeing my suffering, my parents wept and made a vow to God on my behalf. Their vow was, "If you will heal our son, we will give him to you and your service." From the day they prayed the sores began to dry up, and within a few days I was completely healed.

After a few years, I forgot my vow and began to run after youthful pleasures of the world. My parents saw this and rebuked me, but I took no notice. When they asked me about baptism, I made excuses. "There are still a lot of things for me to experience. After that I'll see about it." And the years passed by.

From my childhood my mother had taught me to read the Bible. So even in my youth when I was chasing after pleasure, I sat down to read the Bible. The passage I should have read that day was Proverbs 21, but suddenly I had an urge to look elsewhere. I read Ecclesiastes 11 instead. As I read Solomon's words, fear, alarm and confusion arose in me. Verse nine read "Rejoice in your youth, let your heart cheer you, walk in your ways," but in the end "God will bring you into judgment." Those words convicted me, because I remembered that after judgment, sinners will be cast into the lake of fire.

Immediately I got down on my knees, wept before God, and confessed all my sins. I received God's forgiveness and power.

After a few days I was baptized, received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and renewed the vow I made when I was twelve. That was May 15, 1991. Now I'm walking according to that vow, and studying in the School of Evangelism in Kodaikanal. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
ABIDE
SEEK
KNOW

July

1 Pray that God will provide traveling mercies to those returning home from the **General Conference** delegate meetings in Aurora.

2 Many Advent Christian **camps** begin their summer programs this month. Pray that lives will be touched for Jesus Christ at adult, youth, and children's camps across Canada and the United States.

3 Many Christians in **Liberia** including some connected with Advent Christian congregations have had to flee the country because of renewed fighting. Pray for peace in that troubled nation.

4 As we celebrate the 217th anniversary of the United States, praise God for the **religious freedom** we enjoy and pray that God will give wisdom and guidance to our **elected leaders**.

5 Pray that God will give strength to Christians in nations where religious freedom is **not** guaranteed.

6 Pray for Advent Christian pastors and congregations in **Nigeria**.

7 Pray that **Barbara White, Beryl Joy Hollis,** and **Marion Damon** will experience God's joy and peace as they serve him today in India.

8 Pray that God will lead a couple to consider career-missionary service in **India** with Advent Christian missions and that he will make it possible for them to enter that nation for service.

9 Praise God for **David Vignali** and his service as General Conference coordinator. Pray for David as he returns to the Philippines to continue his work with Advent Christian missions there.

10 Pray for graduates of **Oro Bible College** as they seek to serve Jesus Christ in the Philippines during the months and years to come.

11 Praise God for the service that **George and Beverly Teshera** have provided in the Philippines. They will return home next month after eight months of service.

12 Pray that **Margaret Helms** will be granted a permanent visa to remain in the Philippines for her full term of service.

13 As a new semester gets underway at **Oro Bible College**, pray that God will provide for the needs of the

college, the faculty, and the students.

14 **Praise God** that through faith in Jesus Christ, we've received forgiveness for our sin and the promise of eternal life in his coming kingdom.

15 Pray that God will raise up men and women to **proclaim the good news** of God's grace in nations throughout the world.

16 Pray for Christians in **Malaysia** who face the threat of arrest and jail for sharing their faith with Muslims.

17 Pray that God will touch lives for Christ through the work of Advent Christian missionaries in Malaysia: **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam**; **James and Mercy Devadasson**, and **Ruth Devairakkam**.

18 As **Steven and Ann Lay** establish the location for a new Advent Christian congregation in West Kobe, Japan, pray that people will respond to the good news of Christ's love.

19 Pray that the language students that **Ruth Soucier** teaches will hear a clear presentation of the gospel.

20 As **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** complete their last term of service in Japan, pray that their last months there will be especially fruitful for God's kingdom work.

21 Pray that God's Spirit will undergird the work of Advent Christian pastors and leaders in **Japan** today.

22 As World Mission Director **Harold Patterson** works to set the future course for Advent Christian world missions, pray that God will give wisdom and guidance to that task.

23 Pray that God will give strength and discernment to the General Conference senior staff: **Brent Carpenter, Millie Griswold, Dave Ross, Harold Patterson, Bob Mayer**, and **Bob Cole**.

24 As regional superintendents **Clinton Taber, Hal Vannoy, Richard Thurston**, and **W. James Smith** work with Advent Christian congregations in Canada and the United States, pray that they will be sensitive to God's leading for the situations they are called to relate to.

25 Pray that Advent Christian **chaplains** will be effective today in their ministry to those in the United States armed forces.

27 Pray for **Abel Garcia-Lara** as he works to establish a Hispanic Advent Christian congregation in the metropolitan San Diego area.

28 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they serve the Advent Christian congregation in Memphis, Tennessee.

29 Praise God for the Christian commitment of **Tecate Bible Institute** graduates and pray that God will direct each of them into an area of ministry and service.

30 Pray for Advent Christian national missionaries in Mexico: **Arturo Angulo, Ever Perez, Alberto Gomez**, and **Ernesto Gamez**.

31 Pray that God will strengthen **your pastor** as he communicates the Word of God and works to provide direction for your church.

DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE

from page 13

noise. Bustle. Loud voices. Too much activity with too little opportunity for reflection. Unfortunately, we seldom encounter Jesus in the hecticness of the daily grind.

A.W. Tozer once noted that our goal in worship is more than believing—"it is beholding. Active beholding." And, speaking from personal experience, one cannot behold much of anything on a dead run.

In seventy-two hours or less, Jesus delivered on his promise. He accomplished the impossible, not just the unlikely. Death yielded to life. He rose never to die again. His success against the impossible beckons us to rid the sanctuaries of our lives of the noise, the merchandising, the hustle.

The rats race on. The margins of our lives spill to the edges of the page. As the treadmill turns at an accelerating clip, the angle mercilessly increases in pitch. The bazaar scene is endlessly duplicated in the average American life-style. Jesus invites... no, he demands, a change. Sanctuaries need hushed times to hear the voice of God.

A mecca of quiet in the city of a life bustling with countless visitors. Amazing. Astonishing. Remarkable. Sensational. Certainly. But impossible? Not quite. Remember, the One who calls us into the stillness accomplished the impossible in seventy-two hours or less.

Do something about it now. You just can't beat a leisurely walk beside a quiet stream with the Shepherd. ❑

EDITORIAL

FROM PAGE 3

lar source, writer, or speaker no matter what the issue or topic. That's not healthy! And if the speaker or writer is someone like Jim Jones or David Koresh, it can be downright dangerous. Always evaluate what you hear from me or anyone else and don't be afraid to disagree. And when you disagree with what's written, do two things: Use that as an opportunity to look at what you think and believe and don't be afraid of opinions and facts that might stretch or challenge your thinking. And feel free to write me a letter expressing your opinion. I enjoy hearing from you. You can write to me personally or write it as a letter to the editor for publication. When we get enough letters about an article or topic, we run a Letters to the Editor column.

Next month in this column, I'll be back with some thoughts about David Koresh and the fiasco in Waco, Texas. I can't guarantee you'll agree with me but I promise to do my best to offer you an opinion that will stretch your thinking. The catch Franco Harris made twenty years ago is still controversial among football fans today. Good editorials are like that catch—they stimulate discussion, disagreement, and new thinking about how to respond in a Christlike way to our times. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

If Christians modeled what good race relations looked like and dealt with those racial issues within the context of the body of Christ, I think it would have radical implications for our society. Before we go out and try to tackle racism in our culture, if we could clean it up in our churches and in our own lives as individuals I think that could have a profound effect.

—*Kay Coles James quoted in* World

That is his call to us—simply to be people who are content to live close to him and to renew the kind of life in which the closeness is felt and experienced.

—*Thomas Merton*

Satan has erected fortresses in people's lives through incest, child abuse, domestic violence, alcoholism and countless other addictions, spiritual abuse— any way he can deceive, rob, and enslave. But instead of tearing down these fortresses with truth and grace, the church has fought about the color of the hymnals. We have taught classes, built buildings, served on committees, and gone to seminars so that our leaders can be spiritually gratified. . . We have taken each others' spiritual inventories to make sure people aren't going to movies, wearing makeup, or chewing gum in church. We have taught people prayer recipes and formulas. . .Have we lost our focus? Have we left behind our true job of leading people into the grace and real empowerment that comes from dwelling simply, honestly, closely with God? Do we keep adding to the "good news" until it's not good anymore?

—*David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen in* The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse

Within the human heart 'things' have taken over. God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.

—*A.W. Tozer in* The Pursuit of God

Grace means that in the middle of our struggle the referee blows the whistle and announces the end of the game. We are declared winners and sent to the showers. It's over for all huffing, puffing piety to earn God's favor; it's finished for all sweat-soaked straining to secure self worth; it's the end of all competitive scrambling to get ahead of others in the game. Grace means that God is on our side and thus we are victors regardless of how well we have played the game. We might as well head for the showers and the champagne celebration.

—*Donald McCullough in* Waking from the American Dream

"When a person's happiness is more important to him than truth, he can become pretty convincing with his lies."

—*Jason Faircloth in Randall Arthur's* Wisdom Hunter

The First Amendment amends a political document and takes its meaning from the context of the document's language and structure...This is why the word "speech" should be taken seriously, not supplanted by "expression". . . . After many years of miseducation the [Supreme] Court is convinced of, and hence the country is committed to, this proposition: The Constitution mandates protection of any behavior that "expresses" a politically tinged attitude. Today's Court cannot fathom that the Founders who wrote the First Amendment used language with a precision—a precision born of philosophic clarity and subtlety—that is foreign to the Court.

—*George Will (June 14, 1990)*

According to the New Testament, our individual worth and significance is not at all dependent on the shifting sands of other people's sentiments...The New Testament teaches that our worth, our belovedness, is dependent entirely on God's decisive act. God has not only said he loves us and values us, but he as acted it out in history. This is the importance of the physical coming of Jesus Christ into the world. The Word became Event. How can we know that we are loved? God has not only said so over the centuries, but he did something very concrete. He stepped into the world at Christmas and came to live among us and to die for us and, thereby, to conquer death itself over us. There is no more substantial object lesson in love.

—*Earl Palmer in* Love Has its Reasons

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WITNESS

July/August 1993

Victoria Schmidt

FRENCH AUTHORITIES SEIZE CHILDREN OF PROTESTANT FAMILIES

Stéphane Antoine
Flavius Mihaïes
Jonathan Antoine
Octavius Mihaïes
Nathanael Bahjejian

In February, seven children in France were taken from their parents and placed in state reeducation centers. Police say the parents indoctrinated their children with biblical teaching.

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Hurricane Force 4

It's been nearly one year since Hurricane Andrew roared into south Florida. Pastor Ray Marco talks about the impact the storm had on his congregation and their vision for ministry in the months and years to come.

Non-profits Make Biggest Impact in Andrew Clean-up • 5

Jack Kevorkian: Angel or Murderer? 8

Should doctors and health professionals assist when a patient wants to commit suicide? Charles Priebe reflects on that issue based on his personal experience as a chaplain in a hospital setting.

French Authorities Seize Children From Protestant Families 10

Do you think persecution happens only in Communist and Islamic countries? Think again. Elisabeth Farrell reports on how French authorities have taken children from their parents simply because they were teaching evangelical Christianity to them.

Freedom in the East—Persecution in the West • 13

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The Antoine children, taken from their parents by the French government on February 10, 1993.

NNI Photo

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

JONESTOWN II: THE WACO CHRONICLES

I DON'T KNOW what you feel when you see pictures of death, violence, and war. I usually feel a mixture of anger and despair. It angers me to see innocent people suffer and it frustrates me that I can do so little about it. Fifteen years ago, an arrogant, deranged man who passed himself off as a caring, contemporary Christian pastor led over 900 of his followers to death by suicide in a South American jungle. Jim Jones had an almost hypnotic power that not only duped his followers but leading San Francisco city officials as well.

"Same song, second verse," I thought while watching the buildings at the Branch Davidian compound burn out of control. Another deranged and cruel man, Vernon Howell (a.k.a. David Koresh), small time rock-and-roller and Messiah wannabe, displaying those same Jim Jones-style hypnotic skills. Just like his demented predecessor, Mr. Howell possessed an uncanny ability to make lonely and hurting people like and trust him. And Mr. Howell persuaded his followers that only he could correctly interpet the Bible and unlock its prophetic mysteries. No need for questions. No need to think. Just trust Vernon Howell, come to the Waco compound, and do his bidding.

Messianic delusion

Who's responsible for the tragedy at Waco? Whom do we hold accountable for the deaths both inside and outside the compound? With apologies to the politicians and media elite who love speculation and fingerpointing, the answer is simple and clear. Vernon Howell himself was responsible for those deaths. Mr. Howell lied to his followers and created a climate of fear. And nearly one-hundred people died because of it.

But holding Mr. Howell responsible doesn't absolve the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and the FBI from scrutiny in their handling of this case. It's alarming that both agencies underestimated the religious dimension of this confrontation. Several knowledgeable psychiatrists and theologians with expertise in dealing with religious cults and their practices tried to warn the agencies that disaster could easily happen.

But their counsel and advice was essentially ignored and, in your editor's view, it was shunned because of a latent hostility toward anything religious in many government agencies and institutions. Religion is seen as a nuisance to be avoided whenever possible, not as a legitimate interest within American society. That attitude has no place in the Justice Department, the FBI, or any other law enforcement agency.

A wake-up call for Christians

What lessons can Christians learn from Waco? The same lessons we should have learned from Jonestown. I like how Terry Muck put it in the *National and International Religion Report:* "Beware of anyone who grabs for absolute authority over other people's lives; claims sole interpretation of Scripture; or advocates a radical separation from society and a worldview so pessimistic that there is no sense of hope, joy, or cheer." To that, I would add, "Beware of anyone who's afraid of honest questions about how the Christian faith relates to the struggles of life. And beware of anyone who substitutes rule-keeping of any kind for the grace of God."

Mr. Howell brought fear and despair to his followers. Jesus Christ brings his followers joy and hope. Mr. Howell confined his followers to an endless list of do's and don'ts. Jesus tears up those lists and invites us to receive his love, acceptance, and forgiveness. Mr. Howell craved power and control. Jesus brings true freedom. Mr. Howell demanded unquestioned obedience and blind loyalty. Jesus knows our struggles and welcomes our questions. Mr. Howell brought death. Jesus brings life. ❑

A CONVERSATION WITH RAY MARCO

Hurricane Force

LAST AUGUST, almost a year ago, Hurricane Andrew slammed into south Florida and caused more destruction than any other natural disaster ever to hit the United States. The damage was so severe that recovery efforts are still not complete and will take many more months.

The Oak Grove Advent Christian Church southwest of Miami stood directly in the path of the storm. The church and parsonage suffered significant damage and several families in the congregation had their homes destroyed. Earlier this year, in late January, Advent Christian Witness *editor Bob Mayer sat down with Oak Grove pastor Ray Marco and asked him about the storm, its impact on people, the recovery process, and the Oak Grove congregation's continuing ministry to the poor and homeless in Miami.*

Ray, the morning of August 24, 1992, will be ingrained in your mind for a long time, I'm sure. Could you describe your reaction as Hurricane Andrew came through?

The day before Andrew struck, we spent a lot of time preparing for the storm. People tried to board up their homes and businesses as much as possible. About five families stayed with us that night in the church sanctuary and the first winds hit sometime after three o'clock in the morning. But after five, the winds really picked up. They sounded like a freight train trying to come through the chapel. We could hear the trusses in the roof and things hitting the building even though it was still dark. We could hear glass breaking in the nursery and the front doors of the building being blown in.

While the chapel survived intact, we did suffer a lot of damage. We lost part of the roof over my office, windows in the nursery and kitchen, and suffered a lot of water damage. The carpeting inside was soaked and all kinds of things were blown around the building. We lost our 8 x 10 storage shed. It was picked up by the wind and moved at least 100 feet. We lost our oak trees as well.

Because we were on the northern edge of the storm, the eye of the hurricane did not pass over us. So we took the pounding from the 140-mile-per-hour winds for well over an hour.

After the winds had stopped and the storm had passed, what struck your mind?

We had no idea of what things would look like when the storm finally died down. As daylight came, we looked at the neighborhood across the street and saw that many of the familiar tree tops were no longer there. Then we saw the devastation—damage that we couldn't begin to imagine. There wasn't a telephone pole to be found or a traffic light still hanging. And we were north of the area hardest hit.

People were in shock. When we first stepped out of the chapel and saw the massive destruction, the first thing I said was, "Well, praise the Lord. We're still here!"

No electricity, no phone?

None whatsoever. We were without water for three days, without electricity for two weeks, and without telephones for three months.

As a pastor, what were your priorities in the first week after the storm?

My first goal was to check up on the folks that made up our congregation. There was no communication and with all the trees, stoplights, and street signs down, everything looked the same. During that first week, I missed my street several times while returning home from seeing people.

There were no landmarks and with everyone piling up their garbage and tree damage in front of their homes, every street looked the same.

It took me several days just to get around to everyone in the congregation, to see if they were OK, to see what they needed. We were bringing water, ice, food—anything they needed. And communication was down for weeks. It's hard to describe the isolation that people felt.

How is the recovery process going, both in terms of buildings and people?

It's going well but it's a long process. A lot of people are feeling worn out and somewhat depressed because of how long it's taking. Most people feel like six months should be enough time. But there are still piles of debris being hauled away and roofers are still busy at work. Nearly all of the 300,000 homes from Kendall south to Florida City suffered damage. Getting in line for roofers, window repairmen, painters, carpet installers, and air conditioning repair is a chore. You wind up on waiting lists for everything.

As we speak, some of the people in our congregation are still living in trailers but the recovery is progressing and on the whole we're doing well. One area of ministry that the storm affected was an outreach into a boarding home that we had been involved with for seven years. We would travel down to Cutler Ridge each Sunday morning and pick up about fifteen elderly people for church. They would worship with us and we would cook a meal for them after the service before taking them home.

The boarding home was destroyed and those folks were moved out of the area. They're no longer a part of our congregation and we miss them.

What kind of spiritual impact have these events had on your congregation? Have they deepened your relationship with the Lord or changed your priorities as a congregation?

I don't know how much they've changed our focus because before the storm, we had strong ministry priorities. But the strong word from the Lord that I and our people sensed came out of the fact that while there was widespread devastation, few lives were lost. God is saying to us: I am concerned with people, not with things. Be content with what I've given you and store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

And all of a sudden, everyone was made equal—no matter whether rich or poor, no matter what race, background, or nationality— everyone was equal after the storm. Everything was destroyed. And people took on a new kind of priority.

Before the storm, people spent lots of time and energy in their yards taking care of their lawns and hardly talking with each other. But after the storm, everyone's yard looked the same and everyone was talking with each other.

God's not all that concerned with things. People are his focus and he wants people to come to know Jesus.

The Oak Grove congregation has been very involved in ministry even before Hurricane Andrew hit. Could you share with our readers about your congregation's work with homeless people in Miami?

For the past two-and-one-half years, we've been involved every other Saturday preparing hot meals at the church and taking them twenty-two miles to downtown Miami to feed and share Jesus Christ with homeless people. We bring several vans, a generator, a public-address system, and lights with us. We set those up on the

NON-PROFITS MAKE BIGGEST IMPACT IN ANDREW CLEAN-UP

ACCORDING TO a report from World Relief, the relief and development agency of the National Association of Evangelicals, church-based, non-profit agencies and volunteers have had a major impact on recovery efforts in south Dade County, Florida.

Over 28,000 homes were completely destroyed and another 107,000 received some kind of damage. ICARE (Interfaith Coalition for the Andrew Recovery Effort) is a coalition of groups including World Relief that has coordinated as of April the rebuilding of 1,800 homes for people with no insurance.

In the words of Tom Willey, World Relief's Miami area director, "The greatest amount of rebuilding has been by the non-profit groups for people who didn't have insurance."

Each group working in ICARE brings unique skills to the process. Habitat for Humanity excels in home construction. World Relief has used its church-based network to supply volunteer work groups. And a variety of other evangelical ministries have pitched in to help.

One interesting note from Mr. Willey: "The county realized that volunteers care about quality workmanship. Of the six homes built by Habitat for Humanity in the storm area prior to the hurricane, one lost windows and another lost some shingles while the houses that surrounded these homes were destroyed." ICARE hopes to complete one-thousand more homes by August and another six hundred homes during the next twelve months. ❑

Source for this report: World Briefs: A Monthly Report on Global Development and the Church *published by World Relief.*

street and have a worship time complete with music. We share the gospel. And we feed between 200 and 400 homeless people.

Since we started this ministry, we've prepared and served about 16,000 meals on the streets to homeless people. We also go down every Thursday night on the street and have a discipleship-oriented Bible study for those men who have made decisions to receive Jesus into their lives. We also pick up those men who want to come to church every Sunday morning. We have a specific pick-up point and they know what time the van will be there. Whether two come or twelve come, we're there every Sunday morning to bring them to church.

Since Hurricane Andrew struck, have you sensed more openness to the gospel among people in your community?

I've sensed a real openness to the gospel south of us in the Homestead area. Homestead is seventeen miles south of us and has been the focus of relief efforts from the Red Cross, the military and other groups. But the recovery process there will take a long time and our congregation is already looking at what we can do after those organizations pull out.

I just started a Bible study with a black congregation and their pastor in the Goulds area, just south of Cutler Ridge between there and Homestead. The congregation lost the roof off their building and the pastor is a dear man of God. The church meets in a tent in a very rough community. I go down every Tuesday evening and my goal is to disciple their people and turn them loose with the gospel so they can reach people around them for Jesus. Goulds is a highly drug-infested area, much rougher than downtown Miami. It's been exciting for me to start working with this group of folks who are so open to the gospel.

You're located in a multi-ethnic community with people from all different ethnic groups and backgrounds around you. What are some things that Advent Christian congregations located in urban and ethnic communities can do to effectively minister to people who need the gospel?

Any congregation that is serious about Jesus and about obeying him needs to be involved in ministry. The last thing that Jesus commanded his followers to do was to go into all the world and preach the gospel. And I believe that if any church is not going into the world proclaiming the gospel—to the lost and not to one another—they're in direct rebellion and disobedience to the command of Jesus.

Our church just happens to be in a unique situation where in our congregation, we have first generation Haitians, first generation Cubans, first generation Germans, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, African-Americans. About a quarter of our congregation is black. And another thirty percent are Hispanic. It's like the kingdom of God and there is a oneness and a bond because of the blood of Jesus Christ. We love each other and we're brothers and sisters in the Lord. The barriers are being broken down.

I think many congregations have to be sensitive to God's Spirit and to what the Scriptures teach to get to that point.

I imagine for you and your church leaders, it's a matter of seeing people with the heart of Jesus.

That's exactly what it is!

Your church also has a dream of doing mission work in Honduras. Tell us about your vision and what you hope to accomplish there.

We have a 250-acre farm in Honduras with a home and a church building already on the property. Our intention is to minister the gospel in the surrounding villages where many people have never heard a clear presentation of the fact that they can personally know the God of the universe through his Son Jesus.

And we hope to provide a place where new Honduran Christians can worship and be trained and discipled. Whether it turns into a congregation there or into a training center for evangelism—we want to be open to God's will. We're hoping, too, that potential Advent Christian missionaries looking for a Latin American experience could come and find a place to be trained and to work. We want this to be a place that is available to Advent Christian missions.

As you reflect on the last few months, what are one or two key things that you sense God has been teaching you personally?

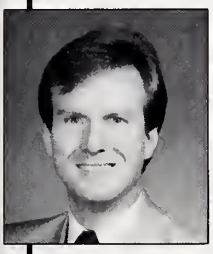
In the last few months, I think I sense more clearly the passion of Jesus. I've been hearing more clearly his heart and his mind for two-and-one-half billion people in the world who have never heard the gospel. And I believe that the Lord is transforming our entire congregation to be missionaries in downtown Miami, in Goulds, in Homestead, in Honduras, and throughout the world. And we're ready to go.

One last question. As you look back on the storm and the ongoing recovery, Is there anything you would like to share with our readers?

The main thing is thank you! Your financial support has been overwhelming both to me and to our congregation. We never expected or dreamed of it in our wildest imaginations. It has been a major, major blessing to several of our families and others who suffered tremendous loss and had little or no insurance. And we know that the money will continue to help with long-term needs. We praise the Lord for the Advent Christian Church and its congregations and people. You came through for us in an overwhelming way. Thank you! ❑

Thinking about Faith and Service

Homosexuali
Abortior



WHAT'S THE CHURCH TO DO?

Pornograph

Tim Setzer

DAVID KORESH claimed he was Jesus. In the name of Jesus, he killed people, committed sexual immorality and a host of other sinful deeds. A doctor who performs abortions is murdered by a pro-lifer. He justifies killing the doctor because the doctor was murdering babies. How tragic! In other words, the end justifies the means.

But the response of some Christian leaders to the murder is even more shocking! Don Treshman of Rescue America, "While Gunn's death is unfortunate, it's also true that quite a number of babies' lives will be saved." Randall Terry of Operation Rescue had before the event said, "We've found the weak link is the doctor. We're going to expose them. We're going to humiliate them." After the incident, part of his response was, "We have to recognize that this doctor was a mass murderer." A protester in Melbourne, Florida said, "Praise God, one of the (baby) killers is dead!" Rescue America has established a fund, not for the family of the doctor, but for the family of the killer, as if to say, "we're behind you; you did the right thing!" With these events and many others, Christianity is certainly not getting good publicity. Sometimes it makes you want to hide and not let anyone know you are a Christian.

I'm concerned about the direction many Christians are taking on social issues. Yes, I believe abortion is a sin. I believe homosexuality is a sin. But I also believe the way many Christians are dealing with these issues is sinful. It was certainly wrong to murder that doctor. It is wrong, in my opinion, to go to a public hearing and be disrespectful. Yet this is what many Christians are doing in the name of Jesus.

> We are living in a post-Christian America. Our confrontational tactics are like throwing pearls to pigs.

How does the church do in response to situations such as these? How do we become effective witnesses in a world that is negative towards us? The church in America today has become issue oriented. And I'm beginning to believe that Satan is using our fight against evil to destroy us. The Evil One has so distracted the Christian world toward abortion and homosexuality that we have forgotten what we're all about.

We have forgotten the basics. We are not in this world just to fight evil in a confrontational manner. We are here to spread the Good News of Jesus. And there is a difference between those two tasks. The Good News of Jesus will overcome evil. We are living in a post-Christian America, an America that no longer sees religion, Christianity or God's Word as relevant or acceptable in public debate. Our confrontational tactics are like throwing pearls to pigs.

We are to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ. We are to be like him. I do not know of a time when Jesus stood up against the evils of the Roman empire. The world will always have elements opposed to God and his Word. These movements will always entice us to fight them, wanting to distract us from our primary responsibilities. But we cannot allow the world to establish our agenda. Our primary agenda must be the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

But today, many Christians are more willing to fight against abortion or homosexual rights than they are willing to sacrifice so that God's work through the church might be accomplished. They are more willing to march in protest than they are to walk across the street and establish a friendship with a neighbor that could bring

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JACK KEVORKIAN *Angel or* MURDERER?

Charles M. Priebe, Jr.
Mechanic Falls, Me.

DR. KEVORKIAN — "Dr. Death"—angel or murderer? That's being debated throughout the media and in the Michigan State Legislature. What do I, as a retired minister, think of what "Dr. Death" has done?

I've been pondering the ethics of "mercy killing" long before Dr. Kevorkian began assisting people with committing suicide. My own debate began forty years ago, when I served as pastor of a small village church and a full-time chaplain, employed by the State of New York to minister to patients in one of its large TB Sanatoriums.

Two events—one in a church member's home and another in that hospital—began my 43-year quest for an answer. Morals in medicine and in the ministry are now problems that affect many in our society today. So perhaps what has happened to me in the past may help you to judge Dr. Kevorkian.

Turn it off!

The phone rang in my home early one morning way back in 1950. "A doctor wants to talk to you and he sounds quite upset." I went to the phone and, after a short conversation, invited him to come over. When he arrived, the physician downed a quick cup of coffee and then, as doctors usually do, got right down to business.

"You've been visiting my mother regularly," he said, "and I'm grateful for that." There was a long pause, and then he added, "I was hoping that you could come over and give her Holy Communion before her artificial respirator is turned off. She says that she's too old to be kept alive by that machine and wants to die. She's sick of suffering." He didn't give me a chance to answer but got up, bolted for the door, and called over his shoulder, "I'll see you at the house."

Here was a physician wanting to "pull the plug" on his own mother. And he was trying to involve me in it. To be honest, I didn't know what to do. Despite having had fine ethics and pastoral care courses at seminary, I had never been prepared to handle anything like this.

After discussing the problem with my wife, who had overheard the whole thing while serving the coffee, I tried to reach a more experienced pastor in a nearby town. Then I tried to contact my superior. Neither was available, so I went to the home prepared to debate the issue with the doctor and his mother.

When I got there the debate was already in progress—between those two and the mother's own local physician whom the doctor-son had called in. Despite better arguments than I could present, the woman and her son won the debate because the attending physician suddenly sat down, put his face in his hands, and looked up to say, "Well, if that's what you really want, but. . . ." He stopped speaking, never finishing the sentence.

The mother's face brightened. And with a big smile, she asked me to begin the service. I'm ashamed of myself *now* that I didn't give her phy-

sician more support. But at the time, it seemed right to conduct the service and to offer Holy Communion to all three. The mother and her son received, but her physician refused to partake. He put his hands forward at first and then pulled them back, whispering, "I'm sorry. I can't do it."

After the final prayer the son turned to his mother but said nothing. She tried to sit up and put out her arms to embrace him. There were tears on his face when he hugged her; but he got up, turned to the other physician and, in a peremptory tone, said, "Turn it off!"

Shocked by the order her physician actually backed away from him and said, "Absolutely not. If that's what you want, you do it." The mother stared at him in unbelief, and then turned to her son and waited for him to act. I found myself silently praying that he would not do it.

The son never said a word with his lips, but he begged for help from his colleague and from me by simply looking at us helplessly. To this day I don't know why I did what I did and, to be honest, I'm ashamed to say that I participated.

I suddenly found myself saying to the son, "I will not turn it off either but, if it will help, I'll place my hand on top of yours as you turn it." The mother said, "Please do it son." Then she turned to me and said, "Thank you."

Her son put his hand on the handle and I put mine on top of his. His hand was as cold as ice and there was a tremor through his whole body. I waited and waited—doing nothing to help him.

Suddenly he turned the handle, dropped to one knee and waited. Nothing happened! *His mother did not die but had another year and four months to bless her family—and me!*

In terrible agony

My last participation in a "mercy killing" was even less successful than the first. It happened a few months later in that huge TB hospital in New York.

A transient, separated from his wife because of his unfaithfulness and from his parents because of his incorrigible conduct, was picked up from a city street and "legally committed" to the hospital to prevent the spread of his disease. He claimed he got tuberculosis by sharing his "booze bottles." I don't know why, but the man finally accepted me "as a friend but not as a minister" as he adamantly insisted. However when my new "friend" finally realized that he was going to die, he asked not only for prayer but for my promise to be with him at the end.

I was always called day or night, if any patient became "terminal." But this man insisted on a note being put on his chart in the nurses' station. He even had a big card at his bedside table with phone numbers of my home, office, and any other place I might be.

The night he died was as black as pitch. Snow piled high on each side of the road was what enabled me to see the way through the rain and sleet as I drove up the hill to the hospital.

As soon as I got there we talked for a moment before he lapsed back into a coma. He lived on and on in terrible agony. So long, and in so much pain, that I found myself getting angry at God. I thought, "If you are a loving God, why do you let this man suffer as he is? Please let him die!"

I got up to look out the window, but the driving sleet made it so dark that the window became a giant mirror reflecting the suffering man on his death-bed. He writhed in agony and called out for his mother. I was furious at God!

I went to his bed and placed my hand on his head, hoping that he'd think his mother was there. When he cried out again I pressed a little harder and this time he said, "You're hurting my head." At that I bent down, called him by name, and said, "I'm sorry!"

When I said, "I'm sorry," a wonderful thing happened! He opened his eyes and gave me a smile like I had never seen. He looked straight at me and, in tones as clear as a bell, said, "I know that you are sorry—*and God bless you!*"

"God bless you!" There I was almost cursing God and that sufferer was asking God to bless me. You know what? God did bless me!

It's difficult, and almost embarrassing, to say what happened next for fear that it may sound silly or overly dramatic. All I can tell you is that a "warmth" entered the room, touched the top of my head, and flowed down over me. I looked down and that man was as peaceful as a sleeping child. In a few seconds he took his last breath—and was gone. I've seen hundreds of deaths in my years of ministry but never one like that.

In the hands of God

Now my conclusion! In light of my attitude toward God in that sanatorium room; in light of my conduct in the presence of that aged woman and those two fine physicians; what can I say about Dr. Kevorkian?

My assisting in the stopping of a life-prolonging machine, and my try-

see page 18

Here was a physician wanting to "pull the plug" on his own mother. And he was trying to involve me in it. To be honest, I didn't know what to do.

I'm ashamed to say that I participated.

FRENCH AUTHORITIES

Elisabeth Farrell

SEVEN CHILDREN, all former members of a Protestant church in Paris, were forcibly taken from their families in February and placed in state reeducation centers. Police authorities allege the parents have indoctrinated their children with biblical teaching, home schooled them, "sequestered" them, disciplined them by spanking, held them in confinement, and encouraged them to fast for religious reasons.

The children, who range in age from 25 months to 17 years old, have not been allowed to communicate with their parents since they were taken February 10.

Members of the church, Eglise Chrtienne Biblique (Christian Bible Church), say the seizure of their children is the culmination of six years of intense religious persecution, including verbal and physical aggression, vandalism, surveillance, sabotage at work, and intimidations and threats to church members and their friends.

According to a church elder, Paul Dick, persecution became so severe that the church had to disband three years ago. "There was no possibility we could continue to worship in any kind of formal way," he said. A United States citizen, Mr. Dick is managing director of the French affiliate of an American corporation in Paris.

Members of the church, which Mr. Dick described as a "non-denominational Protestant, Bible-believing, Bible-teaching congregation," moved to different locations around France, but persecution continued unabated. Prior to its disbandment, the church was led by up to seven elders, and was at one time affiliated with the Baptist denomination in France.

Baptists in New Zealand maintain ties with members of the disbanded church, according to Derek Pearce, editor of the Christian newsletter, *The New Zealand Beacon.*

A synchronized raid

The children were taken in a reportedly synchronized operation that began at 6:00 a.m. on February 10. Fifty police raided seven homes in various cities, searching property, confiscating documents, and taking all adults and children into custody.

Police showed Axel and Delwyn Schmidt of Paris a search warrant and said they were looking for information regarding a complaint lodged against someone else. After the house was searched, the Schmidts and their three-year-old daughter, Victoria, were taken to the police station where they were told they would be questioned about the unidentified person. But as the day wore on, the Schmidts realized they were the real focus of the interrogation.

"The questioning went on and on," remembers Delwyn Schmidt, 26. "[They asked] endless questions about my Christian friends, our church, our beliefs." The interrogation continued until 4:00 p.m., but Schmidt says her daughter was given virtually nothing to eat.

"I had just asked politely, once again, for some food for Victoria when the policewoman. . . put her head in the door and, hearing my last words, said, holding her hand out to Victoria, 'Do you want to come with me for lunch?'"

Mrs. Schmidt said she got up from her chair, but Victoria had already taken the policewoman's hand. She promised Mrs. Schmidt she would bring Victoria right back, but an hour later a policeman announced Victoria was being placed in state custody.

"The police had lied to me, mocked me, cheated me out of my daughter," Schmidt said. "In the car on the way to another police station they were insulting and mocking."

The Schmidt family

Mrs. Schmidt said her clothes and personal belongings were removed,

PROTESTANT

she was body searched, and put into a police cell. "[I was] treated like a common criminal," she said. "I felt unreal, as if I was walking on air. Only one word kept me from breaking down, the name of Jesus."

After three hours, Mrs.Schmidt said, she was told she could go home, but she refused to leave without her daughter. "They put me out by force, each of them just took an arm, and I found myself outside. It was night and I didn't even know how to get myself home. I walked half-an-hour to the train station in a kind of shock. My husband was still in custody. And my daughter had been stolen from me by deceit and lies."

Members of Eglise Chrtienne Biblique who were taken into custody

The Antoine children, (L-R), Céline, Jonathan, and Stéphane

SEIZE CHILDREN OF FAMILIES

and/or interrogated on February 10 include Daniel and Esther Antoine and their children, Stephane, Jonathan, and Cline, of Dissay in the Loire Valley; Michel and Sylvie Bahjejian and their child, Nathanael, of Prevessin, in eastern France; Michelle Dick, daughter of church elder Paul Dick; Georges and Dlia Mihaães and their children, Bianca, Flavius, and Octavius, also of Prevessin; Axel and Delwyn Schmidt and their child, Victoria; Catherine Seelig; and Pascal and Karen Solomon.

All are French citizens except Michelle Dick, a United States citizen, and Delwyn and Victoria Schmidt, who are citizens of New Zealand. "These are not crazy people," Paul Dick said. "These are lawyers, dentists, engineers, and international consultants."

Most of the adults and all the children above age eighteen were released after questioning. Children below the age of eighteen, however, were interrogated by police for up to ten hours and placed in state custody. Two mothers, Esther Antoine and Dlia Mihaães, were imprisoned for five weeks on charges of assault and battery, sequestering minors under 15 years of age, and neglect. They were released only after paying a $50,000 bail.

Another mother, Sylvie Bahjejian, was hospitalized with injuries sustained during the raid. A doctor certified she had abrasions and bruises on her forearms, wrists, upper back, and the soles of her feet.

Children held incommunicado

From February 10 through 18, parents said they were unable to obtain any information on the condition or location of their children, in spite of daily inquiries. They later learned Children's Judge Marie-Odile Degrelle-Croissant had ordered the children placed in state custody on February 12.

"The children, when questioned by the gendarmes, monotonously reeled off stereotyped phrases specifying that they are... happy and content, and want to live freely their faith," according to orders written by Ms. Degrelle-Croissant. "Whereas the conditions... are likely to seriously endanger the evolution, the psychological equilibrium and the full development of the minors... for these motives we order the placement of the children at the DDASS [State Reeducation Centers]."

Ms. Degrelle-Croissant also ordered psychiatric examinations of the children. According to the parents, the judge did not see the children or talk with the parents before issuing her ruling.

A few days after the children were placed in state care, one of them, Céline Antoine, escaped surveillance and telephoned a friend. She said she wanted to go home immediately and was determined to request this of the judge. She later also mailed a letter in secret, saying she was being "impris-

Mrs. Bahjejian and her children at a park

oned" and wanted to return home.

Ms. Degrelle-Croissant went on vacation February 15-19, with no one assigned to monitor the case. Upon her return she met with the Schmidts, who presented a medical certificate from a doctor stating that Victoria would suffer serious consequences due to separation from her parents.

According to the Schmidts, Ms. Degrelle-Croissant refused to accept the certificate, and instead ordered them to undergo a psychiatric evaluation.

Six days later, Ms. Degrelle-Croissant suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized. No other judge was apprised of the children's cases until three weeks later, and the parents say no one was assigned to answer their questions.

During the first week of March, one of the parents spoke with a worker at the State Reeducation Center who said the children were in an intolerable situation and he was determined to resolve it. Ten days later he was reassigned to another case.

On March 19, the director of the Education Aid Center, a government agency that assigns reeducators to work with children and retrain them according to state guidelines, wrote to the parents stating the office was overworked and could not take the children's cases for an indefinite period of time.

Parents say their children have been held incommunicado since February 10 when they were taken. All letters, photographs, school books, and other items the parents mailed to them were returned, and parents were told the children did not want to communicate with them.

"The families have gone to the judge, written letters to the judge, asked to see the children, sent letters and gifts to their children, and received absolutely no feedback," Mr. Dick said. "They don't even know where they're being held."

"The[y] have been 'legally' sequestered," Mr. Dick added, "and their young minds and spirits subjected to psychiatric and psychological pressure despite parental objection. They have been interrogated several times, initially by the police and. . . later by the investigating judge in an attempt to substantiate unfounded accusations against their own parents. They are being systematically indoctrinated against their parents.

"We have not been able to contact them in any way. Even criminals are not treated this way," Mr. Dick said. "They've been contacted by persons hostile to the church [who've] been given access to these precious children while their own parents don't have access to them."

News Network International contacted Children's Judge Degrelle-Croissant and Investigating Judge Florence Vigier for comment on the cases, but received no reply.

Forces behind the state action

Behind much of the persecution, Mr. Dick and the parents believe, are disgruntled former church members, as well as an organization called Union Nationale des Associations pour la Defense de la Famille et de l'Individu (National Union of Associations for the Defense of the Family and the Individual [ADFI]).

Mr. Dick said ADFI is an independent organization, but is financed by federal and local governments and private parties. He has learned ADFI interrogated two minor-age daughters of former church members and twisted their testimony to build a case against the church.

"ADFI's lawyer is also one of the key lawyers of the Communist Party in France," Mr. Dick added. "This is indicative of the situation we're facing. [In] France. . . an atmosphere of suspicion of anything spiritual has been created, qualified, and exploited by powerful atheistic organizations. Churches that believe in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit are regarded as suspect."

He said ADFI is a "particularly powerful organization that has strong 'deprogramming units' designed to attract members of what they regard as sects or cults, and to convert them to their way of thinking. Unfortunately, this conversion also involves teaching such persons to denounce. . . attack, and destroy individuals and families that belong to religious groups."

In March, ADFI published a 400-page book, *Le Grand Decervelage* (The Great Brain Removal), by Bernard Fillaire, which includes a list of approximately 200 organizations that ADFI claims are cults. ADFI defines cults as any group that inspires a significant behavioral change in those who join.

Included in the list are the Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, Opus Dei, the T.L. Osborn Foundation, and a number of Catholic groups. Also included are groups widely viewed as genuine cults such as the Church of Scientology and the Unification Church.

France is one of 136 signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a 1990 document that opponents argue discriminates against the family by placing the rights of children above the rights of their parents. The United States has not signed it.

Church members believe the document is being used as partial justification for the seizure and reeducation of their children.

Mr. Dick said the church is calling for an international inquiry. "We're asking for people from a neutral country to say, 'Show us what this is. Let us listen to both sides and help make a judgment.'"

Church members and friends say they are shocked that such blatant religious persecution can occur in a country such as France.

"This all sounds like Russia before communism fell," said Mr. Dick. "That's exactly what we're living. The battle for the lives of children is very basic. These precious children are each one carriers of faith, and if their faith is snuffed out or stolen from them, we have to act." ❑

Elisabeth Farrell is special assignments coordinator for News Network International, a news service that specializes in reporting on issues relating to religious freedom and persecution of Christians in countries around the world. Copyright © 1993 by News Network International. Photos by NNI.

Freedom in the East, Persecution in the West: ONE FAMILY'S SAGA

THEY LIVED under a communist regime. They were forced to hold Bible studies in secret, to read Scripture under cover of darkness, and to watch helplessly as friends were thrown into prison.

Yet the real persecution did not begin until they moved from Romania to France. In the country where "liberty, equality, and fraternity" are enshrined as the national motto, they were searched, slandered, and spied upon because of their faith. Their businesses were harassed to the point that they went bankrupt. And if all that was not enough, their children were brutally taken from them in an early-morning raid and sent to state centers to be reeducated.

Their story seems almost unreal, yet Georges, 48, and Dlia, 46, Mihaïes say that God has sustained them in miraculous ways through it all, and that there is a purpose in their suffering.

In October 1973, Georges left Romania for what he thought was a temporary stay in France to do graduate work on a fellowship from the French government. The Romanian authorities allowed Dlia to follow in September 1974, but only if she left behind their two-year-old daughter, Bianca, in order to ensure their return.

Not long after Dlia arrived, however, the couple learned that Romanian police had searched a friend's home and discovered Christian books that could be traced to the Mihaïeses. If they returned to Romania, they would be thrown into prison. Yet if they stayed in France, they would be separated from Bianca. They made the difficult decision to stay and were not reunited with their daughter until almost the last day of 1976.

Yet their time of persecution was far from over. Most people they spoke with in their new country were surprisingly suspect of their Christianity. "Our faith disturbed people," Dlia says, "and yet there was nothing exceptional in it. It was the Word of God as we had seen it lived at home and everywhere where faith is sincere. Yet here we were running into more and more difficulties.

"We were searched, we were accused of atrocious misdeeds, we were slandered on television. . . put under surveillance, subjected to aggression, division, separation. When we tried to cry for help because we were being kept from living our faith, the message didn't get through. On the contrary, we were subjected to even closer surveillance."

Georges says that the business he founded in Paris, an international technology firm, was subjected to an intensive slander campaign. Dlia, an internationally respected musician and teacher, watched as concerts she scheduled were suddenly canceled and the International Classical Music Competition she founded was boycotted. Their sons, accomplished musicians on the viola and violin, were mocked and ridiculed.

Today, the Mihaïes family is torn apart. They have not seen their sons since police took them from their home on February 10, nor do they know where they are. Dlia has been released from prison, but is forbidden to leave the house for more than 48 hours. Their businesses are in ruins and their house has been taken from them. And pressure is being exerted on members of their church to speak against them; those who have also had their children taken from them are told they can get them back if they speak against the Mihaïeses.

Which is France and which is pre-revolutionary Romania? ❑

—*Elisabeth Farrell*

Women's Ministries

My Most UNUSUAL Answer to Prayer

Glenda Carpenter
Charlotte, N.C.

THROUGHOUT our lives in the ministry, my husband Brent and I have seen many answers to our prayers and to the prayers of others. But never have I seen an answer unfold quite the way this one did. We all know God sometimes responds to our prayers with immediate answers, whether it be yes, no, or wait. Finding the answer to this prayer was like walking through a labyrinth. We would walk in one direction only to find the way blocked. We would try another path, only to find it blocked also. Not until we were safely through the maze did we understand why there were so many alternate paths.

My husband has been pastoring Advent Christian churches for about fifteen years. With each change of pastorate, Brent always felt the unquestionable leading from God. Our last move was no different. We knew God was calling him out of our pastorate in Clovis, New Mexico, to Charlotte, North Carolina, to serve as director of Church Relations. We felt like Paul in Acts 20:22, "And now, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem (our Charlotte), not knowing what will happen to me there." Everything began falling into place as it always does with the right things happening at the right times. We stood amazed at God's timing. Even our home sold the last week before we moved, even in a buyer's market.

There was one area which gave us our greatest concern and received the most prayer. As parents, our children's well being is always important. Moving is always a hard adjustment, especially if you're a teenager. We have three sons: Scott, Chad and Brian. When we moved they were ages 17, 15, and 11 respectively. We were moving at the end of the summer before Scott's senior, Chad's sophomore, and Brian's sixth year. None of us wanted to move because we were happy in Clovis. But we all accepted God's direction.

All the doors seemed closed

Brent began writing to the area for information about the schools. Then upon our arrival we began visiting the campuses. Charlotte is a city of over 400,000 people as compared to Clovis, a town of about 30,000. The high school that our sons were to attend in Charlotte was, at the time, the second largest in the state of North Carolina. Scott had gone to a high school of about 1000, and Chad a junior high of 300. We investigated the Christian schools in the area and found them to be either out of our range financially or too rigid in their control of the students.

But we found one school which proved to be a little more affordable and acceptable in their attitudes and regulations. Even though it would put a strain on our budget and the boys would have to drive fifteen miles one way, we felt this might be the answer to our prayers. But we were disappointed because they had no openings for any more seniors. We'd hit a brick wall in our search, so we continued on.

We live at a corner of Mecklenburg County which forms a triangle with two, more rural counties. We knew others who had sent their children out of the county—so we tried that path. These counties had been gaining increasing numbers of out-of-county students, and would not take anymore of them.

We thought, "God must want us to send our sons to the public high

school." So we enrolled them and continued to pray. Scott is an outgoing young man with a positive attitude so he was going to make the most of the situation. Chad is a little quiet but he too was willing to give it his best. But a day in a high school of 3,000, where you don't know anyone, was a little more than either had bargained for. They weren't used to seeing police in the hallways needed to maintain security in a school this large.

After three days, Chad, our sophomore, came home and announced that he didn't care what we did to him but he couldn't face another day in this school. My heart was broken. The thing we wanted most was to do what was best for our children. "Lord, haven't we been obedient? We've asked for your guidance. We've sought your direction. Have we not understood what we should do?" We prayed as honestly as we could.

The only thing I could think of was to call the Christian school we originally liked. Perhaps they could make an exception. My husband called and the principal said he had been thinking about us all day. One of their seniors had not returned and they could take our sons if we were still interested.

Were we still interested? My husband was out of town that weekend so I took the boys up the next Monday to enroll them. I had only been there once and wasn't sure how to find the school. But I prayed for help. I passed a road that I felt I should turn on, so I turned around and went back. It led straight to the school even though it wasn't the road my husband and I had taken before. It was a shortcut. When God gives direction, he really guides.

God's timing is good

Our sons loved their new school, their new friends, and received a wonderful Christian education. I saw our son, Chad, bloom and grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and most importantly spiritually.

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Oro Bible College
Equipped for Service

Dorothy Warriner
Cagayan de Oro, Philippines

"EQUIPPED for Service" is the motto of Oro Bible College, located in the beautiful city of Cagayan de Oro in the Philippines. Seventy-six men and women have been trained and equipped since this Advent Christian college was founded in 1971. Six years after coming to the Philippines, George Teshera helped begin the college. He became its first director. Delia Emano, Beverly Teshera, Laura Putnam, Luree Wotten, and Margaret Helms were among the other teachers. After three years, the first graduating class of three women and one man received certificates of graduation.

One of the earliest graduates, Hermenegildo Mahinay, is now pastor of the Claveria Advent Christian Church, known as the mother church of Advent Christian work in the Philippines. Pastor Mahinay came from a non-Christian family and was baptized in 1963. He and his wife have four children, and their youngest daughter, Merriam, entered OBC in 1992. The other daughter and the two sons are OBC graduates; the sons, Hermongenes and Samuel, now pastor Advent Christian churches and the daughter, Lourdes Supangan, is a pastor's wife.

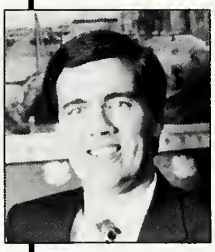
In the Philippines, many entire families, like the Mahinays, are active and dedicated Christians. Another such family, with members in the ministry, are the Supangans. The father, Frank Supangan, was a pastor, so some might say, "That explains it!" But Fernando, the eldest son of the seven children, stated in a chapel message that he had experienced the hardships of a pastor's family, expected to live on little money and to be available at all hours, sometimes with little thanks. As a young man, Fernando worked as a carpenter and made twice as much money as his father received as a pastor. But he had seen the faith and patience of his parents and their love for God and people. And Fernando, too, wanted to serve God. His older sister, Marina, graduated from OBC in 1978, and with her husband, Helix Cabuya-on, now serves on the island of Bohol. Fernando graduated from OBC in 1987 and now serves as chaplain and instructor at the college. He is also pastor of the Maranatha Bible Church on the campus—the largest Advent Christian congregation in the Philippines. A younger brother, Mateo, also an OBC graduate, is pastoring the Surigao Church, a congregation which has seven students now attending Oro Bible College.

George and Beverly Teshera returned to America in 1978 and after pastoring for twelve years, retired in 1990. Now they have been called out of retirement to serve the college and the mission for the first eight months of 1993. Delia Emano has taught continually, serves as academic dean, and teaches church history at Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro.

Praise God for the many who have been "equipped for service" and are in the ministry. Praise him for the dedicated faculty, staff and students of Oro Bible College. The prayers and gifts of God's people have played a large part in these accomplishments and will be just as important in the days ahead. ❑

Advent Christian missionary Dorothy Warriner and her husband Austin have served at Oro Bible College for the past year.

Family Builder



William Batson

Teach Your Children Well

IN THE EARLY 1970s, there was a popular song by Crosby, Stills, and Nash which urged parents to "teach your children well." However, they were not the first to press this piece of parental counsel. Proverbs 22:6 states the ancient wisdom, "Train a child in the way he should go." But what do we teach them? In what direction should they go?

Chuck Swindoll tells of a list the Houston Police Department developed called "Twelve Rules for Raising Delinquent Children." It clearly portrays how not to teach your children.

Among the rules were these:

- Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
- Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he is twenty-one and then let him decide for himself.
- Do everything for him so that he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility on others.
- Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
- Take his part against neighbors, teachers, and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.

Teach that God cares about them

What, then, should a parent teach a child? Children need to know that each person is a unique creation of God. Knowing that there is a heavenly Father who created them and cares about them is central to getting through the inevitable defeats and disappointments they will encounter in life. We teach this lesson by making sure that God is part of our child's everyday life.

I've wanted my children to know that the most important things in life cannot be bought. They live in a material world where kids are killed for sneakers and leather jackets. Commercialism, which puts a price tag on everything, is a dominant influence. A parent needs to help a child gain a proper perspective on wealth and possessions. Cars, cash, stereos, and exotic vacations are inadequate substitutes for the time and love children need most.

Reliable standards of right and wrong are needed by children to help them develop character which withstands incredible peer pressure. Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind* writes that almost all of his freshman students at the University of Chicago reject the idea of universal standards of right and wrong. This rejection of absolutes for behavior is a major contributor to the destruction of our nation's families and moral integrity.

Our children need guidance and limits

In our homes we need not fear establishing basic rules of right and wrong. Our children will not be

stunted in their emotional and moral development by such rules. In fact, they need guidance and direction on what are the right choices. Some choices are better and more sound than others. All choices have consequences, of which we must teach our children.

In teaching standards of right and wrong, the Bible continues to be a reliable basis of authority. Paul wrote, "The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right" (2 Timothy 3:16, LB). I think the Ten Commandments continue to be a superb and acceptable guide for human behavior for all people and times. Do your children know them?

The Pulitzer prize-winning and best-selling author, James Michener, said: "The home still ought to be the cradle of all values." Teach your children well by your words and actions so that they will learn from you, their parent, the most central truths about life and love. ❑

William Batson resides in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, with his wife and two daughters. He is a pastor and speaks frequently on family matters.

Answer to Prayer from page 15

Why did we have to go through such a frustrating process? Couldn't God have provided a shortcut? Why couldn't we have gone right into the Christian school? It's all so clear in retrospect. If we hadn't experienced the other school, we wouldn't have known how much we wanted this one. We may have questioned if our sons would have been happy in the public school. It would have been harder for us to bend our budget to afford something we weren't sure was necessary. Not only did we as parents need to be shown these things, but our sons also benefited from this process. By the time they got to the Christian school, they wanted to be there as much as we wanted them there. They were willing to sacrifice some of the things that a large public school could offer, such as a large band and tennis team, for the things of more importance offered in their Christian school.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of these who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This verse has new meaning in my life now. ❑

Glenda Carpenter lives in Charlotte, N.C., where her husband, Brent, serves as Director of Church Relations at the Advent Christian denominational offices.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

September

1 Praise God for the eight months of service that **George and Beverly Teshera** provided in the Philippines and pray for them as they travel to several mission conferences to speak about Advent Christian mission work.

2 Praise God for the excellent work **David Vignali** did this summer in coordinating the Advent Christian General Conference Triennial Sessions in Aurora and pray for him as he serves our Lord in the Philippines.

3 Pray that God will supply the needs of students studying for Christian service at **Oro Bible College**.

4 Pray that the Lord will provide strength and health to **Frank Jewett** and the team traveling to train Advent Christian pastors and leaders in Nigeria later this month.

5 Pray that God will continue to bless the work of Advent Christian pastors in **Nigeria** as they proclaim the gospel.

6 Pray that Christians in war-torn **Liberia** will bring the peace and reconciliation of the gospel to their nation.

7 Pray that God will supply the needs of students and teachers at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico as they begin a new semester.

8 As **Alberto Gomez** and **Ernesto Gamez** plant Advent Christian congregations in the Baja California province of Mexico, pray that God will lead them to people ready to respond to the gospel.

9 Pray for field superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he provides oversight for Advent Christian mission work in Mexico.

10 Pray for **Floyd and Musa Powers** as God leads them in avenues of ministry and service in Japan.

11 Pray for **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** as they enjoy their last few months in Japan and serve the Lord in ministry there.

12 Pray for **Ruth Soucier** as she has opportunity to communicate Christ's love to students in her English classes.

13 Pray that God will richly bless **Ann Lay** as she

communicates the Good News of Christ's love and as she celebrates her birthday today.

14 Pray for **Steve Lay** as he and Ann oversee the construction of the new missions center in West Kobe.

15 Pray for Christians in **Malaysia** as they face government opposition for proclaiming the gospel there.

16 Pray that the Advent Christian missionaries in Malaysia—**Ruth Devairakkam, James and Mercy Devadasson**, and **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam**—will have courage and boldness in their ministry.

17 Pray that God will use **Tamil Bible Institute** in Malaysia, where Advent Christian pastor **Dorai Raja** is principal, to raise up a core of committed Christian workers in Malaysia.

18 Pray that God's grace and strength will be with **Margaret Helms** as she serves Jesus Christ in the Philippines and as she celebrates her birthday today.

19 Pray that God will bless and guide new Southern Region Superintendent **Larry Withrow** as he begins his work with the region.

20 Pray that God's wisdom and discernment will be with the regional superintendents—**W. James Smith, Clinton Taber, Hal Vannoy**, and **Richard Thurston**—as they work with Advent Christian congregations in Canada and the United States.

21 Pray that the Lord will bring **revival** to Christians throughout Canada and the United States.

22 Pray that God will give wisdom to **government leaders** at the local, state or provincial, and national levels. Pray for your leaders by name.

23 Pray that Christians in **India** will have the courage to speak about Jesus Christ in a land where both Hindus and Moslems are hostile to the Christian faith.

24 Pray that God's Spirit will provide national leaders of the Advent Christian conferences in **India** with wisdom to make the right decisions for furthering the work of the kingdom.

25 Pray that **Beryl Joy Hollis, Barbara White**, and **Marion Damon** will sense God's joy, peace, and grace as they serve him today in India.

26 **Praise God** that through his grace, millions of people continue to find forgiveness for their sin and healing from many perplexing issues and problems.

27 Pray that **Jesus Christ** will return soon and that before his return, millions more will response to the Good News of God's love for them.

28 Pray that God will give strength and guidance to Executive Vice-president **David Ross** as he provides leadership for the Advent Christian Church.

29 Pray that God's strength will undergird the senior and support staff at the Advent Christian **denominational offices** in Charlotte.

30 Pray that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** will experience God's power today as they speak about Christ's love in the inner-city of Memphis.

Thinking About Faith from page 7

that person to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We cannot simply oppose those things that we feel go counter to God's Word. We must offer good. Look back over the fight against abortion. What have we accomplished by putting so much time, effort, and money into trying to make abortion illegal? How much more good could we have accomplished by setting up homes for young girls who were pregnant, who really did not want to have an abortion but didn't see any other way out? We have allowed our society to put us where they want us, fighting against them. We're fighting rather than doing the good that will ultimately destroy evil.

If the church were as dedicated to building relationships and sharing Christ as we are to fighting these evils; if we were as committed to helping the homeless, feeding the hungry, meeting the needs of the elderly living on fixed incomes, ministering to prisoners, to orphans, broken homes, and those who are abused, I think the world would stand up and take notice. We should be proclaiming the Good News of Jesus and doing so much good that we are receiving as much media attention as that wacko in Waco proclaiming he was Jesus. Although Peter Cartwright was speaking to the issue of slavery, I believe we would do well to apply his words to the issues of our day; "If the religion of Jesus Christ will not bring about emancipation of the slaves, nothing else will." ❑

Kevorkian from page 9

ing to order almighty God to end a life in a hospital is far different from Dr. Kevorkian's use of his "death-device." But! But! And please think about this carefully. I did not kill but what was my intent? Was it not the same as Dr. Kevorkian's intent? I think it was.

Even so, I do not approve of what Dr. Kevorkian is doing, just as I do not approve of what I did as a young minister. I believe that both Dr. Kevorkian and I will eventually stand before the same Divine Judge. If Dr. Kevorkian is judged as guilty, shouldn't I be also?

Yes! I feel as guilty as "Dr. Death," even more so because of my ordination vows. But I pray for forgiveness through our Lord Jesus Christ. *I was taught, and now firmly believe, that only God almighty should decide when we take our last breath!* ❑

Charles Priebe worships at the Mechanic Falls, Me., Advent Christian Church. He attended the University of Delaware, Oxford University, and Houghton College and pastored Episcopal congregations in Venezuela, South Africa, and the United States before retiring in 1985.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Before Jesus cleared the temple, blind and lame people were a hinderance to its operation. They were beggars, always in the way. Today, too many hurting people in a church are "bad public relations." But when Jesus turned over the tables, the hurting were no longer a hindrance to the operation of the temple, they *were* the operation of the temple! "And he healed them" (Matthew 21:14).

—*David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen in* The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse

We make room for Christ's grace when in true humility of mind we acknowledge and confess our own weakness.

—*John Calvin*

. . . God's two great commandments are first that we love him with all our being and secondly that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Sin, then, is the reversal of this order. It is to put ourselves first, virtually proclaiming our own autonomy, our neighbor next when it suits our own convenience, and God somewhere in the background.

—*John R.W. Stott in* The Contemporary Christian

Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of a brother. This is the one thing that will save us from ever being offended in the confession of another. It forever delivers us from conveying any attitude of superiority. We know the deceptiveness of the human heart and we know the grace and mercy of God's acceptance. Once we see the awfulness of sin we know that regardless of what others have done we ourselves are the chief of sinners.

—*Richard Foster*

What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.

—*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

Jesus did not fear public opinion. He never let the opinions of others change his attitudes or actions, and he made no attempt to "create the right impression" just so people would follow him. He did his work faithfully and obediently, free of the tyranny of "what others will think." You and I can also live this way because he can empower us. The more we do so, the happier we will be.

—*Archibald Hart*

We may here point out the great difference that has come to exist between the Christianity of the early days and that of today. To us it has become a performance, a keeping of rules, while to the men of those days it was, plainly, an invasion of their lives by a new quality of life. . . . We have so little of what the New Testament calls "faith."

—*J.B. Phillips*

I never had much patience with religious people, and to my great surprise Jesus had trouble with them too. They accused him of being a drunk, a glutton, and having terrible taste in his choice of friends. Here was a man who believed he was the Son of God, and one of the chief complaints against him was that he wasn't religious enough! I liked him immediately!

—*Rebecca Pippert in* Hope Has its Reasons

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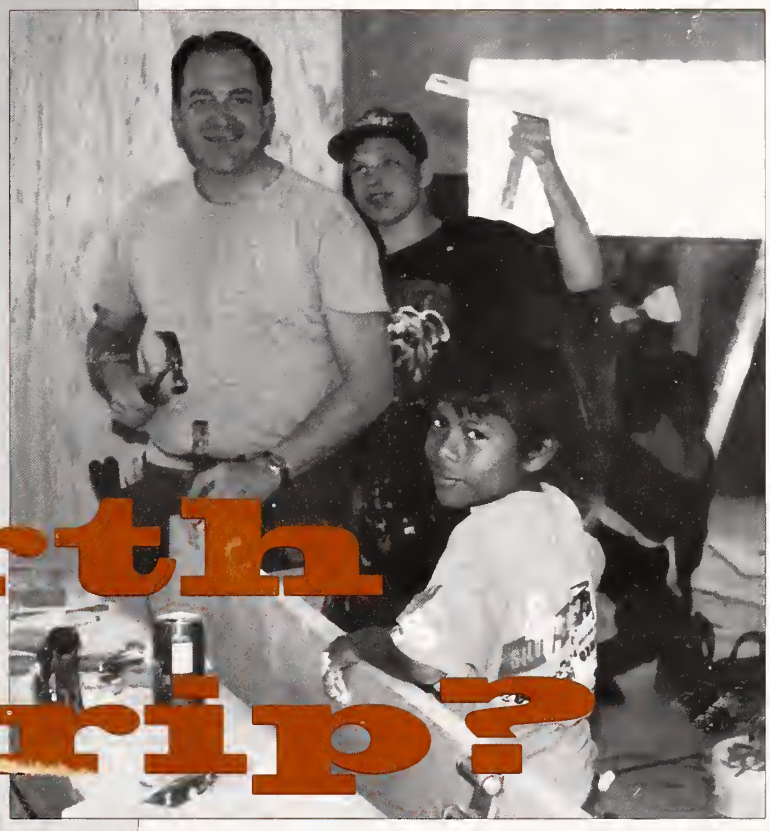

Was It Worth THE Trip?

For a group of Advent Christians from New England, the answer is "Yes!" Read why on page four.

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Short-term mission trips. Are they worth it? For several Advent Christians who travelled to Mexico earlier this year, their answer is a resounding "yes!" Gary Bailey shares their story.

Christianity: Religion or Relationship? 7

Pastor Clio Thomas reminds us that Christian faith is much more than a set of rules or religious customs. It's a vital relationship with a person—Jesus Christ.

God's Love Made Visible: A Conversation with John Perkins 8

John Perkins is recognized by many as one of evangelical Christianity's leading spokesman on a variety of issues. In this interview, he reflects on growing up in Mississippi, on how justice and economic development relate to each other, and on the important role the church must play in the years to come.

Running Away 16

For Scott Hubbard, running away from God has brought him face-to-face with the legal system and jail. But his poem and story on these pages are a reminder of God's love and care for all of us.

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On the Cover

Earlier this year, men from two New England Advent Christian congregations journeyed to Mexico for a one-week mission project with Mexican Medical Mission. Their story appears on page four.

—Photos by Gary Bailey

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Advent Christian WITNESS

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Don't Take Religious Freedom for Granted

IN OUR LAST issue, we published a report describing how French authorities seized children from parents who were members of an independent, evangelical church. The parents' crime? Home schooling their children and teaching evangelical Christianity to them. As we go to press, the children remain in state custody.

It's easy to dismiss this story as an isolated case of zealous bureaucrats overstepping their authority. But I think there's something much deeper happening. Within what we call Western society—the democratic, capitalist nations of Western Europe and North America—there's a growing hostility to religion and to notions of religious freedom.

Religion is seen by many within government, law, and the media as something that must be restricted to private belief. And actions that grow from those beliefs must be restricted or regulated by government. So while it's permissible to believe that parents are ultimately responsible for their children (something that the Bible clearly teaches), attempts to translate those beliefs into public actions through home-schooling must be regulated and eventually stopped. While it's fine to allow churches to meet, congregations must be regulated when they seek to build or expand their facilities.

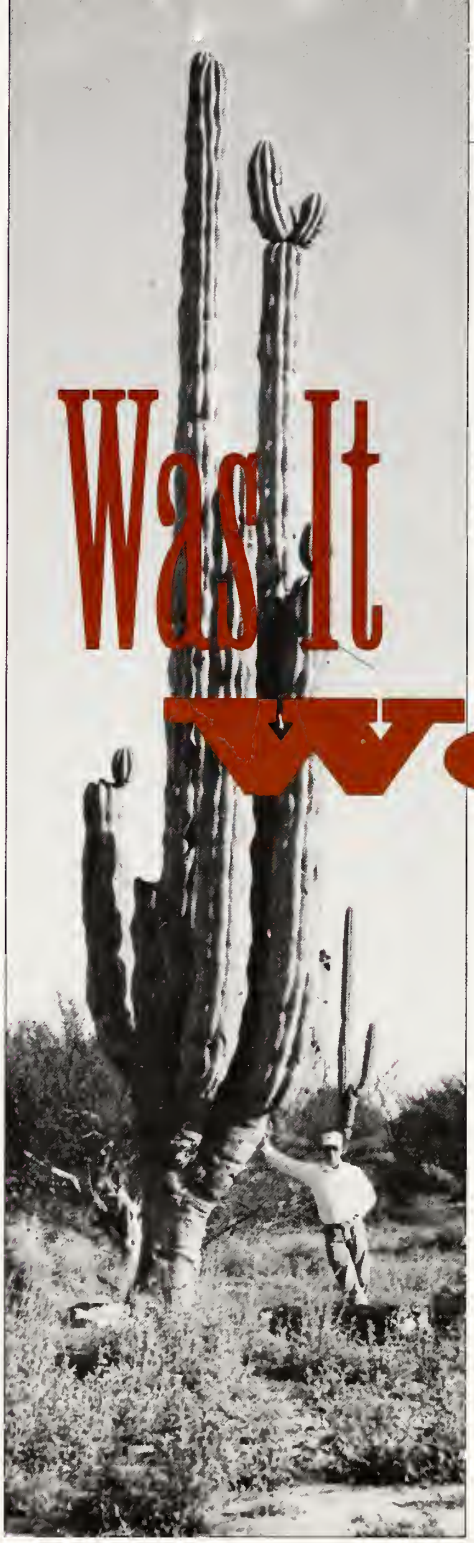
How easy we forget

It's been only five years since the United States won the Cold War with the Soviet Union by default. Do you remember one of the big reasons we spent billions to match Soviet military might? The Soviet Union was officially an atheist state and all forms of public religious expression, including regular worship services, were brutally repressed. So we fought the so-called Cold War to protect our freedom to believe and practice our religious faith. Now I wonder if our society is starting down the same road the Soviets pursued for over seventy years.

Those who advocate and pursue this hostility toward religious freedom have forgotten that those who wrote the United States Constitution were passionately concerned about protecting this freedom. That Constitution makes two simple but profound statements regarding religious expression. First, "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust" (Article VI). And "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . ." (Amendment One) Simply put, the Constitution requires that religious expression—both private and public—is a fundamental right and that the government may not restrict it. At the same time the government may not create any religious requirement for holding public office nor can it pass laws to favor one religion over another.

Sadly, the courts have twisted these simple ideals into a hodgepodge of case law that hopelessly confuses simple, clear constitutional teaching. Under the guise of an extreme interpretation of the "separation of church-and-state," religious freedom is under attack. And in my view, this trend is especially dangerous because religious freedom is foundational to all of the freedoms we enjoy as members of a democratic society. Dictatorships like the former Soviet Union, China, and Iran provide clear evidence that when religious freedom is restricted, it's not long before speech, travel, association and other freedoms we take for granted are restricted as well.

So be prepared for more incidents like the one in France we reported in the last issue. Be prepared for growing hostility to religious freedom in Canada, the United States, and throughout Western society. And keep in mind that the more restriction of religious freedom, the greater threat to all of the other freedoms we take for granted. ❑



Gary with the saguaro cactus

Was It Worth THE Trip?

Pastor Ed and child

Gary Bailey
Rochester, N.H.

THE JETLINER banked hard on its climb out of San Diego, and as we swung around to face the east and New England again, I took my last photo: the city and harbor through gaps in the clouds. How the palm trees contrasted with the snow and ice to which we were returning.

The eight of us, five men and three teenagers, had spent the last week, our February vacation week, working in a small and impoverished neighborhood in San Felipe, Baja, Mexico. We worked on a new hospital for Mexican Medical Mission, putting up plywood and sheetrock, painting, and hanging doors. We slept on the bare floor in sleeping bags. We even ate our own cooking—most of the time.

There were now a few hours to reflect on whether or not a short-term trip like this was worth the time, energy, and money. How might I measure its effectiveness? After much inner debate, I came up with three questions, the answers to which mean something to me personally. First, was it a life-changing event for anyone? Then, did we accomplish anything of eternal or even temporal significance? And finally, was it "missions?"

Lives were touched

It was important to me to see lives changed and spiritual growth occur not only among the Mexican people but among those of us who went. That began to happen even before we left. At least one of our teens, Larry Flood, paid the total cost of his trip out of savings from hard work. The example of his own sacrifice moved all of us.

Several of the team came under strong and unusual spiritual attack just before departure. I was in bed reading late one evening when I felt ill and started to get up to get a drink. I was stricken with a pain in my back so severe that I collapsed onto my knees by the bed. My wife Gale got up and came around the bed and prayed for me. She reached out to lay hands on me and was also stricken so that she went right to the floor. But her prayer for me caused my pain to leave, and I got up and immediately began to pray

for her. Her attack soon passed. We sat there on the edge of the bed wondering, "What just happened here?" The next day we began to hear of other members of the team also having a sense of Satan's opposition. One of the men stated that he and his wife had been arguing over small things all week and had needed to pray away the oppression in their home. But these attacks only caused us to be more aware of the Lord's provision for us, to be more prayerful, and to be more expectant that he was going to do great things on our journey. This growing sense of living life on the edge of a great spiritual battle has not left us even after returning from Mexico. If it's the only permanent change in our lives, it will have been worth the trip.

But as we traveled and worked, there was an ever-increasing realization of blessing and of the presence of Christ. We began to take unusual provision for granted. Driving across the empty desert one night, the van went for over an hour after missionary John Hull said both tanks should be stone-cold empty. A small blessing? A coincidence? Perhaps. But we firmly believe that it was an answer to our concerted prayer. And it has made us more prayerful since.

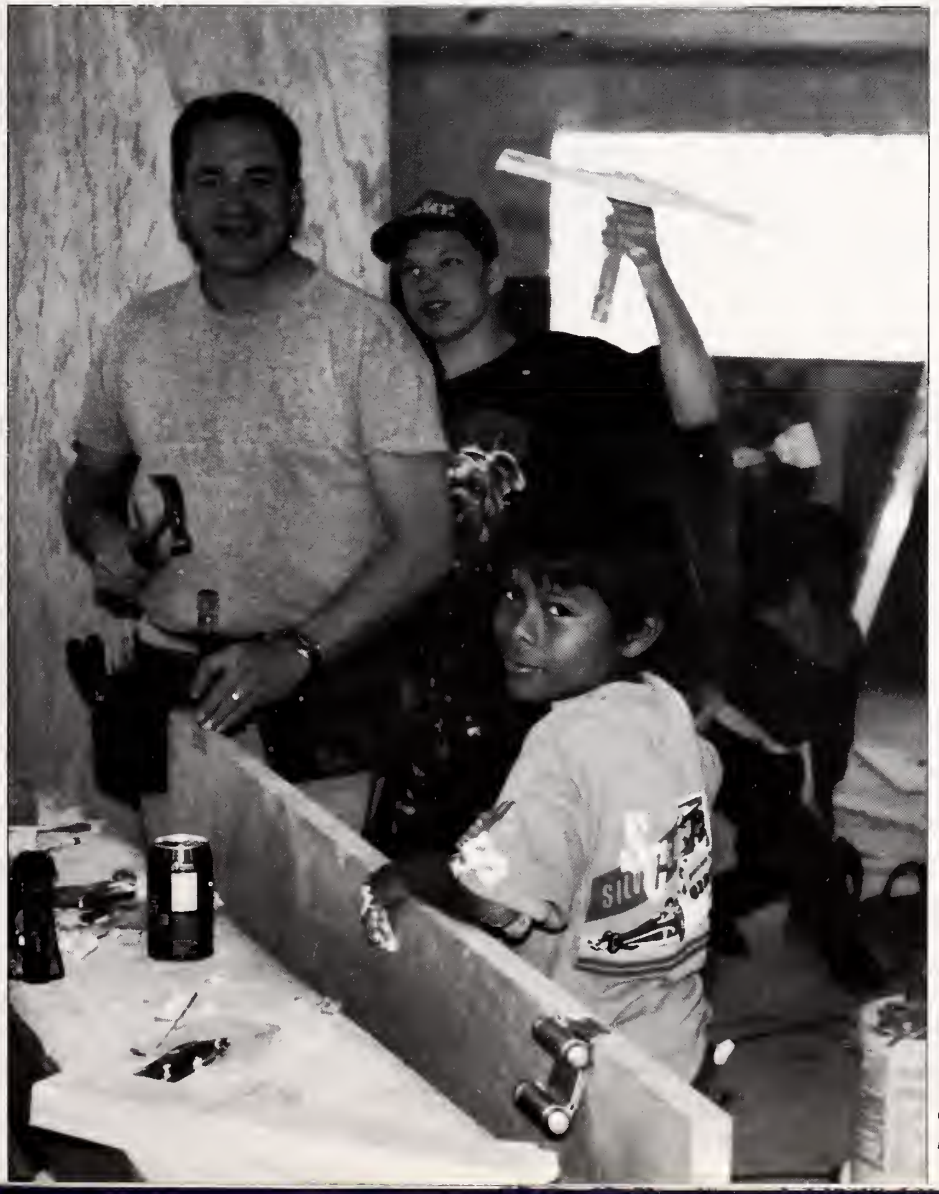
We saw God's leading even in the make-up of the group. When we left for Mexico we had no idea what needed to be done when we arrived. The hospital could have been in any stage of completion. But upon arrival we discovered that there were tasks awaiting us that were especially designed for our skills and abilities. Perhaps the most remarkable of these was that the interior doors were ready to be hung. The squaring of door frames, the application of jambs, mortising of hinges, and the sizing of the double-swinging doors into the surgery and wards, was work for experienced carpenters, not just any volunteer. On our team we had two carpenters: myself, and Terry Long, who teaches wood shop here in Rochester, N.H. Not the least important of God's provision was that in our all-male group we had one who was an excellent cook. Pastor of Care at Emmanuel Church (AC), Ed Wingren was willing to put up with the joys and sorrows of cooking for eight eating machines. Believe me, it was a ministry in itself.

We all had our capabilities stretched. We had to pray over various frustrations, setbacks, and work that had to be redone. We had to "make do" with few tools and poor materials. At times we had to trust that God would supply something we did not have. And he did, not once but many times.

Have we been changed? Yes. All of us are eager to do more for Christ than ever before. Having seen a beautiful people live amid a dearth of material goods and a poverty of spirit, we have what we believe to be a divine restlessness in our souls. We are much less complacent. We formed a spiritual bond and took on the spiritual burden of praying for others.

Part of a team

But what of lasting value can a small group of men accomplish in a week? If it were us alone, I would say, very little. We were, however, part of



Gary and helper hanging doors

a constant stream of Christian volunteer men and women who serve as part of Mexican Medical Mission. This ministry performs acts of mercy by providing medical care to those who would otherwise have none. John Hull told us that the Mexican government would like Mexican Medical to build 60 clinics in the Mexicali area alone. There are three hospitals in that district attempting to serve over 500,000 people, the bulk of whom are too poor to afford even rudimentary care. As we worked, amid the children and the dogs and the dust of that neighborhood, we saw people coming to the clinic. The words of Jesus became so much more real in this situation, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Apparently the Lord thinks that such ministries make a difference.

Our teenagers—Matt Long, Dan Cogdill, and Larry Flood—were especially good with the kids. Sometimes it looked like there were little children growing out of their backs and shoulders. I would like to think that this ministry had an impact too. How different these three young men must have been in Mexican eyes from the hard-drinking American youths that regularly come across the border.

The hospital and clinic ministries provide opportunities for these people to hear the Gospel. We were not rich Americans who had come to give things; we were Christians who had come to give of ourselves. It does not go unnoticed. It is a witness that validates the Gospel message in those barrios. Yes, the trip also qualified as "missions."

We were not rich Americans who had come to give things; we were Christians who had come to give of ourselves. It does not go unnoticed.

The mission field is not measured by distance from one's home. San Felipe is only a five-hour drive from San Diego. That's about the time it takes me to drive from Rochester, N.H., to New York City. But it's a world apart. When we crossed the Mexican border we crossed cultural, linguistic, racial, and socio-economic barriers as well.

We were able to do more than hammer nails or tape sheetrock. We went with John Hull to show Christian films in the neighborhoods in the evening. One night we drove 2 1/2 hours further down the Baja coast to the village of Puertocitas. At the end of the road on the wall of a plywood shack, over twenty people watched a Bible cartoon and a 1970s-era evangelistic film in dubbed Spanish.

You might have thought it less than prime entertainment, but as the film played, small Mexican children would shyly approach the wall and gingerly put out their hands to touch the figures that moved and spoke upon it. It was a bitter February night with cold wind blowing off the water. And to our shame many of us New Englanders huddled in the van from time to time for warmth. But few of those people left until the last scene was over and the credits run. Afterward, as we stopped at the tiniest of village stores for something to eat on our midnight trip home, a teen-age girl came up to us and thanked us for bringing the films and the message in them to her. The week after we returned to Rochester, our team leader, Steve Cogdill, was talking to John on the phone, and the missionary told Steve that twenty-one people made a profession of faith in Christ in a poor neighborhood the previous evening after watching those same films. Yes, it is missions.

continued on page 18

As the crew works in the background, a Christian doctor and pastor spend time with a young boy at the clinic.

RELIGION or Relationship?

Clio Thomas
Seattle, Wash.

ISSUES facing the church are many and they are serious—secularism, violence, poverty, racism, moral decline, environmental issues. But there's something which is at the heart of who we are as Christians which must be faced and solved if we are to intelligently address and meet the challenges which all the other issues bring to us.

Who are we, and what is Christianity? It seems to me that many folks are not too clear about the answers. A lot of people in this great land look on Christianity as one of many good belief systems. It is one of many world religions, all of which lead to pretty much the same end. The Christian faith has to do with Jesus Christ, and he was indeed a "good man." To be a Christian means that one is to be honest, caring, and a "good" person. If you are a "good" person, then some day you will "go to heaven." Good people also have a good living. That has become the expected norm and standard of thinking among Americans generally.

But all this misses the point—and not only misses the point—but is deadly. Christianity is *not* first and foremost a religion. It is a *relationship*—a relationship with Jesus Christ. God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. In Christ we meet God—and to meet him is a radically transforming experience. A Christian is "Christ's One"—one who has surrendered himself/herself to Jesus. To know Christ is to find and know *life* as it was intended to be lived.

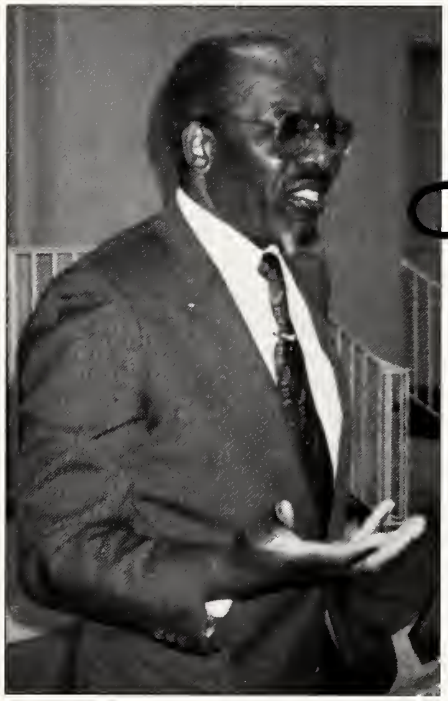
If Christians are Christ's people, then we will deal with the issues of the day in the light of Jesus Christ. The questions of secularism, violence, poverty, racism, and moral decay will be dealt with in a far different way by people who are committed to Jesus and seeking to live out his life in the world, than by folk who are committed to materialism and personal gain, and who only nod to Jesus as the thing to do.

I'm convinced that the future is bright because a lot of people are tired of business as usual, not only in politics, but in the church! People want a faith that makes a difference—a faith that is rational, interesting, challenging, and makes a difference in life. This can happen only where there is a personal relationship with Jesus—and he is allowed to work in every area of our lives.

If some of you are tired of Christianity as a religion, try Jesus as a real person and tie yourselves in with some other folk who know him and who want to make a difference in their world! ❑

Clio Thomas is pastor of the West Valley Advent Christian Church in Auburn, Wash. This article from the Western Advent Christian News, *May 1993.*

GOD'S *Love* MADE VISIBLE



John Perkins is a man of courage and a man who loves people. While growing up in Mississippi, he experienced the horrors of racial hatred and legalized segregation. He took his family to California to find opportunity and a better way of life. But he found even more when he heard the good news of Christ's love. Jesus called him back to Mississippi where in Jackson and Mendenhall, he pioneered a ministry that stressed economic and social justice combined with a bold evangelistic appeal. Today, John Perkins is back in Los Angeles applying the community development lessons he learned in Mississippi. We caught up with him last January in the Springfield community of Jacksonville. He was there to speak to pastors and neighborhood leaders about community development and preach at Springfield Community Church, the urban Advent Christian congregation in Jacksonville.

A Conversation with John Perkins

Rev. Perkins, you grew up in Mississippi at the height of legal, racial segregation. When did you first realize that under the law, the government considered you a second-class citizen simply because of your skin color?

I'm not from an educated family and in our family the most important communication was done around the fireplace at night. When I grew up, that second-class attitude was bred into us. We heard all of the folklore and the conversations adults would have.

But in terms of a specific incident, I remember as a boy when one of my cousins stole a car from someone in his own family and accidentally ran over and killed a white person. They locked him up in jail and on the following Saturday, a mob went to the jail, broke him out of his cell, tied him behind a car, and dragged him up and down the streets until he died.

That's one of my first memories of childhood. So I knew as a boy growing up that I was living in an enslaved system. I think I realized that even more because we were not Christian people, we talked about those issues more. I feel that if I had been from a

Christian home, they would not have talked about it as much or they would have rationalized it so that the children would not rebel. But my folks were of the rebelling type. So I knew from my earliest memory that I was considered second-class based on my race.

I realized that it was an economic enslavement. When I was around nine, my cousin Jimmy and I went to the gristmill, each of us carrying a large sack of corn. We lived about a mile from town and when we walked by a big brick house, a small white boy pointed an air rifle at us and started shooting it. At first, we thought it was real and we sort of begged him not to shoot at us. Well he shot it at us anyway and either one of us could have gone over and made him stop. But even then, we knew that if we did that, the consequences would be harsh.

Today in our meeting with pastors and community leaders, you discussed an event from your childhood where you were told that you would receive a dollar for a day of hard physical labor. When the day ended, you received only fifteen cents. What did that experience teach you?

That was the best lesson I ever had. The experience really helped me understand how the social-economic system functions. I went home and thought about what this man who paid me had that I didn't. I realized that he had the mules, the wagon, the hay, the field. He had the means of production. And all I had were my needs, my wants, and my labor. I began to see that if I'm going to make it in this society, then I've got to get the means of production—the mules, the wagon, the hay, and so on.

I began to understand economics and I started to understand that the well-being of communities, neighborhoods, and of people was determined by who controlled the economics and the means of production. And those lessons were an important early part of my learning.

I think in economic terms first. In my view, justice is an economic issue, our ability to manage the creation in a way that the fewest of people are left out. Justice is including people in the management of the creation, making sure that the creation yields its resources, and distributing those resources in a way that the highest value of life might be perpetuated. So injustice means depriving anyone to open access to those resources of creation. We never should expect anyone to simply give us resources, but we need ways to express our dignity through creative work.

The Christian church has almost removed justice as a part of the gospel presentation and has become content to leave it to the politicians.

We've made justice into something we have to protest and fight for. But justice ought to be an effort we all make to include everyone in the society. I think the people who wrote the U.S. Constitution understood that to some degree. One nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all. They wanted to include everybody in the process. But somewhere along the line, we lost that concept.

Consequently, the Christian church has almost removed justice as a part of the gospel presentation and has become content to leave it to the politicians. We don't talk much about God's standard of justice. And we don't do much to include everyone in society. Instead, we've left that to the political process.

Your ministry now focuses on community development. What has led you into this type of ministry?

It has to do with my desire to work for justice in a way that inspires people and serves as a visible model for folks to see. To achieve justice, you need to reduce the task down to something you can accomplish, something where you can include people in the process. As Christians, we have a responsibility to reflect the coming kingdom of God. Although we will not physically bring in the kingdom in our lifetimes, the way we live in our community and in our relationships with each other should be saying to the world, "God's kingdom is coming. Come join with us." Christians become a visible symbol of God's kingdom.

I think we can do that through community development. Because when we talk about community development, we're talking about empowering people at the grass roots level to take control of their own lives. And that's the best way I can work for justice.

I hear you saying that justice oc-

curs as we attain the ability to make economic decisions and learn to take responsibility for our economic decisions. At the same time, justice happens in our relationships with each other as we learn the reconciling power of the gospel. Am i hearing you right?

Yes, you're on the right track. And the beginning of that is recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of individuals. Each person has the possibility of making a contribution to the overall good of the total society. I don't want to see people, no matter who they are, as a liability. I want to see them as a possibility that can make a creative contribution to their families, communities, and society.

I have eight children and when I raised my kids, I always asked, "Which one of you will become the one in our family who is most productive, who will provide the ingenuity and opportunity for the whole family to better itself and contribute to kingdom service?" I asked my children, "Who in the family will become a doctor or a lawyer? Which one of you will become an agriculturalist or a builder? Which one of you will provide the opportunity for the whole Perkins family to grow?" I wanted my kids to know that any of them could do that. And when they did accomplish that, they needed to sense a responsibility for the entire Perkins family. I feel a responsibility for all of the Perkins family that preceded me and I want my children to sense that same family responsibility.

We need to feel that way about our whole society. It starts at the family level but we must carry that sense of economic responsibility into our communities and our society.

We have a responsibility to reflect the coming kingdom of God. . . . I think we can do that through community development.

Strong families build a strong society.

Exactly. And believing that someone within a family unit will take responsibility to perpetuate that family. We used to think that way in most of our families. That's why one would sacrifice to send others in the family to school. And when that person finished school, he or she had a sense of responsibility to help those who sacrificed. We need to come back to that sense of shared family responsibility.

You were twenty-seven years old when you first heard that God loved you personally. How did that strike you when you first heard it?

It struck me as fantastic good news. It was the end of a long struggle and I found something I had long been searching for. My life was organized around getting two things that I had missed: I wanted to be accepted. And I wanted to be loved.

Then I heard that I am loved by a holy God. And I didn't have to strive to earn God's love. I think this is what Jesus meant when he said, "Come unto me all of you who are burdened and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." During those first twenty-seven years of my life, I carried a burden of trying to earn love. Then I discovered that love came through God's grace and that God loved me.

That morning when I first heard, I sensed there was nothing in me that commended myself to God. But he loved me for who I was. I was loved and that really made a difference to me. That became the motivation for my work today. Knowing that I am loved by God and discovering the freedom he gives me from my burdens, now I can take up his yoke and begin to be concerned about others.

That highlights one of the weaknesses in the so-called prosperity movement in the church today because in the health-and-wealth teaching, you're still living for yourself. As long as you are living for yourself, you carry a heavy burden and you sense little gratitude.

I'm here this weekend with a great opportunity to talk with folks in Jacksonville about community development and the difference Jesus can make in their community. I do that out of gratitude. I don't need to do it. My salary doesn't depend on it. But, you see, God loves me and I want to share his love. God has blessed me and out of the fullness of his blessing, I can communicate my successes, my failures, and my struggles with others, inspiring and encouraging them to do the will of God. That's what my conversion experience, what being loved has meant to me.

When I read your first book, *Let Justice Roll Down*, I was touched by the struggles you faced growing

Skin

Ivory, brown, or yellow,
Red, black, or tan;
Flawless, wrinkled or hairy,
Such are the skins of man.

Freckled, pockmarked, or oily,
Dirty, sun-burnt, or clean;
Skin hides the souls of our brothers,
Souls that cannot be seen.

Piercing - the eyes of our Father,
Seeing the good and the sin;
God sees the souls of our brothers,
Sees only the souls - not the skin!

–Miriam Snow Priebe

up in Mississippi. Going through those experiences must have brought a great sense of anger as you faced the injustice of racism. How did the Lord help you deal with that anger?

I see two phases in my early life. There was the Mississippi life and seeing my brother get killed when I was sixteen. Then I left Mississippi for California and it was almost like leaving my burden behind. There I was working with white people on an equal footing and the opportunities seemed unlimited.

Then I got converted and God called me back to Mississippi. So the break from the past—I made that break when I came to Christ. But when I went back to Mississippi in the 1960s, I regathered that anger in relationship to the oppression, the violence, and the crime. And God dealt with me when I was beaten up in the Brandon, Mississippi, jail in 1970. God brought me face-to-face with the hatred and violence of an oppressive society.

And after my experience of being beaten and tortured there, I had to deal with my own anger. And I had to take some responsibility for that. It would have killed me to have gone on with that anger. There came a time when I had to get rid of that anger by forgiving the whites who had oppressed me. I personally believe that some of my sickness after my beating was God's way of showing me my own pain and hatred, that I hated those white folks and that I didn't want them around me.

But God showed me as I lay in bed recovering... I'm such an idealistic person that when I reach a stone wall—a problem that I cannot solve or a relationship that needs to be healed—it almost kills me. I have to find a way to deal with it. For example, if I've done something to you, I'll go to bed and have a hard time sleeping that night. If I can't reach you by phone, I'll have a hard night. Because I want to pick up the phone, call you and say, "You know, I must have really hurt you with what I said. I didn't mean to do that and I want you to forgive me." You see, I can't go on without finding a way to deal with problems I face.

What happened to me as I was in bed recovering was I discovered my problem—my own hatred, subtle racism, and bigotry. Even though I had been beaten, I needed to forgive. Matthew writes in his gospel, "If you can't forgive your brother's transgressions, how can you expect your heavenly Father to forgive you?" So I had to deal with that reality. And I realized that my Lord had forgiven me and that I could forgive. Then I began to heal. That Brandon jail experience was no doubt the greatest and most powerful experience of my life. It helped to define who I am and opened the door for me to talk with both whites and blacks honestly about love and about justice. Because God has dealt adequately with my own racism and bigotry, I can say things that would ordinarily sound hard. And the Lord has taught me to say them in a compassionate way that won't totally turn people off.

After being beaten and tortured, I had to deal with my own anger. It would have killed me to have gone on with that anger. I had to forgive the whites who had oppressed me.

I'm concerned that we're seeing more hatred among different racial, cultural, and ethnic groups in our society. What can individual Christians do practically to begin to break down those barriers of hatred?

I think we're overemphasizing our ethnicity to the point that we're glorifying it too much. We need to understand who we are, where we came from, and that our ethnicity is OK. We're all equal and our heritage is good. But there's no superiority because of it. With that understanding, the first step is this: Get to know a person from the ethnic group that you have the greatest fear and anxiety with. You need to get to know someone from that group and build a relationship there. It will take some desire on your part to see a concrete relationship develop.

A good way to develop that relationship is to become a learner in that context. Most folks like to teach others. So if you ask good questions, and let that person know you're using what you're learning from them, that also reinforces the relationship because that person will feel good about helping you grow. Picture a schoolteacher. I think the greatest reward a schoolteacher receives is when students return ten years later and let her know how much she meant to them. I remember hearing Bill Clinton's first-grade teacher talk about what kind of child he was and what a feeling she must have had to see one of her students become President of the United States.

She had a part in that.

That's right. So when you become a learner from someone else, that person will in most cases care about you. Go with that person somewhere. Invite them to your home. Catch a ballgame together. Spend some time with them.

One last question. As you look at

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Discipleship

When Things Don't Go According to Plan

Clayton Blackstone

"HE LONGED for a single dazzling moment. A defining performance in a long and storied career," writes Larry Libby.

"It was a state dinner in Tokyo. The political and economic shoguns of Japan arranged themselves around a table that shown with white silk, gold utensils, and brilliant floral arrangements. American business moguls were there, too, silently willing their leader to throw all the condescending smiles back in their hosts' faces. The world's media packed the back of the hall, microphones open, video cameras rolling.

"Trouble was, he'd been feeling a little funny all morning. A little lightheaded. A little shaky. But this was one of those times when personal comfort had to be shunted aside. These meetings—this very dinner—carried huge implications for American business and the world economy. He simply had to be in top form.

"He had just worked his way through the second course—raw salmon with caviar—and was now staring dubiously at the third—grilled beef with pepper sauce.

"He turned to his left and nodded at his smiling host, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa. Then he threw up in the prime minister's lap and tumbled to the floor.

"As his alarmed wife, security agents and personal physician knelt on the floor beside him, he groaned, 'Roll me under the table until the dinner is over.'"

Good intentions. New Year's Resolutions. Refined goals. Fresh resolve. Energizing plans. We've begun to resist the urge to even dream about such matters anymore because of the nasty habit of stumbling on the way.

Like the young lady whose story once appeared in *Campus Life*. She carefully prepared herself to meet her boyfriend's parents for the first time. They went to an elegant restaurant. Everyone naturally felt a little stiff at first. Conversation proved about as difficult as pulling teeth. Then events took an even more decided turn for the worst. She tells the rest of her humiliating story in this reprinted letter to her mother.

"I did everything you taught me, Mom. I coordinated my clothing the night before, wore clean underwear, brushed my teeth, arrived promptly, sat up straight, kept my elbows off the table, smiled, listened attentively to the conversation and contributed to it intelligently. You would have been proud.

"When my Tab with a lemon twist arrived, I raised my glass to my lips... ramming the plastic straw right up into my rightnostril. Blood squirted from my nose and dripped onto the white blouse you gave me for my birthday. I wanted to die! I didn't know what to do first: cry, call you, or pull out the straw, which was still stuck in my nose and pointing directly at Scott's mom's raised eyebrow!"

Our worst nightmare in living shades of green

Sometimes it's enough to make us wish for folks to roll us under the table until the dinner of life is over. I mean, why bother when the partially digested second course winds up in the prime minister's lap, and the CNN cameras catch it all in living shades of green complete with the promise of replay every thirty minutes on Headline News?

Nobody I know enjoys a good stumble. In fact, most of my friends feel pretty red-faced about the times they totter. Occasions when "single dazzling moments" disintegrate into "moments we'd just as soon forget." Moments when you don't know

God has carted off our stumblings to a place where no one can find them.

whether to cry, call Mom or pull the straw out of your nose.

In the split second it takes to snap one's finger, such incidents transform dreams into nightmares. We relive the horror, playing the video recap over and over in our minds. First at regular speed. Then in slow motion. Again and again from different angles.

We berate ourselves with the intensity of an explosive football coach red-hot after a crucial goal line fumble by his running back. It's an in-your-face kind of bawling out. We wished we'd done better. Know we could have done better. Believe we should have done better. Words like *stupid* and *idiot* roll from our tongues like fresh powder snow off the blade of a plow.

Waiting for the shoe that never drops

We wait, braced for a tirade from heaven. If anyone has a right to be incensed, God does. He's clearly laid out his expectations in black and white. His standard, the ultimate in excellence. Instead, he catches us by surprise.

He hasn't punished us as we deserve for our sins, for his mercy toward those who fear and honor him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west. He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him. For he knows that we are but dust...(Psalm 103:10-14, Living Bible.)

Read the words slowly. Drink in the good news. Allow it to seep into your spirit like gentle rain soaking into parched ground. God doesn't treat us as we deserve. The broad expanse of the heavens and his love for us share the same vast measurements. He's carted off our stumblings to a place where no one can find them. He remembers how we are formed. . . .

To remember. To have a notion come into the mind again. To be continually thoughtful or regardful of. To retain memory.

An understanding shoulder to lean on

Big deal. So God remembers. It's only theoretical knowledge. Awareness based on an intellectual comprehension of the facts without a basis in experience. "Hardly," argues the writer of Hebrews!

But Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest who has gone into heaven itself to help us; therefore we should never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, since he had to withstand the same temptations we do, though he never once gave into them and sinned (4:14-15).

He's walked in our shoes. Felt the pressure to bend. Known the urge to do it any way but the Father's.

He's able to sympathize with our weaknesses. He shares our pain when a humiliating stumble knocks the wind out of us. He commiserates with us when we hurt.

He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him. For he knows that we are but dust. . .

The halftime scene is etched permanently on the memory circuits of my brain. We were competing against the powerhouse of our division on our home court. They nearly always went undefeated. Our mark that year hovered near .500. After losing by thirty points plus in their gym, we were playing them close. Their coach met their star player at the half-court line seconds after the horn sounded. He screamed and publicly berated his leading scorer in the finest Bobby Knight tradition for what seemed like an eternity. Folks looked up. Down. Anything to keep from staring at the deliberate humiliation of an already frustrated adolescent.

While the scene you recall differs, we've all been there before. . . on both the giving and receiving ends of the tirade. Sometimes we've even lowered the boom on ourselves. Right now we just remember the awful feeling of wanting to roll under the table until the dinner was over.

Jesus understands. He never resorts to verbal assault. Not even if we throw up in his lap or stick a straw up our nose. He "knows how we were formed and remembers that we are dust."

On the last day of school vacation and a morning traditionally reserved for cartoon watching I asked Elliot to remove nine inches of snow from the sidewalks which serve as a connecting link to our home and the church buildings. My expectations differed from his understanding of how things should be done. He did enough but not as much as I wanted. (For some reason, dads can never bring themselves to say it's done well enough.) I felt impatience begin to churn my stomach as I inspected the task I considered incomplete.

But just before I hit the destruct button, I remembered he was twelve. (Lucky for both of us that I was working on this article!) I recalled my approach to work-related tasks at that age. And I breathed a sigh of relief that Abba doesn't launch into a diatribe every time I stumble over a good work he's prepared for me to do.

We all take tumbles. Ram straws up our nostrils. Throw up in the prime minister's lap. We're only human. It's a fact God knows well. Miraculously, he loves us anyway. After all, he's been working with stumbling, fumbling, floundering, waffling individuals like thee and me for centuries.

We all trip up. Fortunately, Jesus understands. And because he understands, we can crawl out from under the table and go on without fear of a verbal barrage from heaven. Since when is a straw up one's nostril the end of the world? ❑

My Pilgrimage

Struggle of Unforgiveness

Linda Leavitt

IT'S THE SECOND day of May as I put these thoughts to paper. May always brings back memories of my father. May was the month of his birthday. This May is also the seventh anniversary of his death.

Mixed feelings flood my soul with every memory of my father. My father loved life perhaps more than anyone else I've ever known. He had a story and song for every occasion. My father was also an alcoholic and was often referred to as the town drunk. The kind of life he led, and the pain and humiliation it caused, was no secret to his family or to the community. I loved and hated him all at the same time. And the confusion of those thoughts and memories still remain.

When my father accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior, memories of his past caused a struggle in other people's minds as well. My father's conversion was no ordinary event, and through his experience and his testimony many others came to Christ. He was instantly delivered from the bondage of sin that had tried to destroy his life. Jesus had forgiven him and set him free. But my dad struggled in the bondage of his own inability to forgive himself. And the body of believers, who were now his new found family, had the greatest difficulty of all forgiving.

I remember my father's excitement when he spoke to the pastor about wanting to be baptized. I remember his desire for all of his family to witness his public confession of faith. As the day of this glorious event neared, I also remember the look on his face, when the pastor came to inform him of the church vote. The church would not allow him to be baptized, or become a member of their body, because of the sins of his past. How could they be sure he had experienced a real conversion? What would people think of their church for allowing these kind of people into their fellowship?

Over the next few years, I watched my father struggle with the "weight" of this new freedom. And I watched him slowly return to those old friends and that old lifestyle. A few years later, on May 4, 1986, he passed away.

I spoke to my dad a short time before his death, questioning him about his relationship to Christ. His testimony of his continued love for the One who reached out to him remained the same. One of the last statements my father said, though, was, "Why can't we all forgive as He does?"

For a long time I struggled with forgiving this body of believers for what they had done. I often wonder how different my father's life might have been if they could have been more forgiving. But then I realize, perhaps they were no different from me. ❑

God's

Dorothy Warriner
Shijonawate Shi, Japan

NEVER could we have guessed that during our last two years on the mission field we would have so many new and rewarding experiences. It's exciting what happens as we follow Jesus.

Fifteen months ago Austin and I were sent from Japan to serve in the Philippines at Oro Bible College for one school year. This association was a unique challenge. We were blessed by visiting and ministering in a number of the 37 Advent Christian Churches, especially in our fellowship with Maranatha Bible Church at the College. We were encouraged by the dedication and enthusiasm of the Filipino Christians. The seven-week visit of Austin's sister, Luella Johnson, and the six-day visit of four leaders from Japan were highlights of our stay.

Following OBC graduation in early April, 1993, we left for an eleven-day visit to our Advent Christian Mission work in the Madras area of South India. It was exciting to be with our three veteran missionary women and to meet many Indian Christians. There are 46 churches with 11,000 members in the Advent Christian Conference and 16 schools with 10,000 students. The Blessed Hope Fellowship Conference, which was organized less than 10 years ago, already has 20 churches and 1000 members. In spite of great poverty in both India and the Philippines, Advent Christian churches are growing and the Christians are full of evangelistic zeal.

Surprises

Thirty-eight years ago T. Devairakkam and his family left the Velacheri India Church for Malaysia to witness to Tamil speaking Indians working on palm oil estates. Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, but there is some freedom of religion, so Christians can do evangelism among the many Indians and Chinese in Malaysia. All six of the Devairakkam children are active in Christian service. The youngest son is now pastor of the Advent Christian Church in Kluang, a modern and prospering city. We stayed with this pastor and wife and his elderly parents in their lovely rented townhouse.

In Banting, near Kuala Lumpur we stayed with Lucas and Beulah Devasahayam and their four grown sons and two daughters. They pastor two churches and have eight "outreach" locations and an active program of evangelism. There were more than 100 at an evening service at which Austin spoke. Austin baptized 15 candidates in the Morib Sea the first day we were there. He spoke ten times at services, conference gatherings, and cottage meetings in the two countries. We again were challenged by the dedication and efforts of the Christians.

We have been blessed while working in Japan since 1959, privileged to minister in the Philippines, and to visit the India and Malaysia fields. We praise the Lord for his guidance and protection and are grateful for the prayer and gifts of Advent Christians in North America and Asia. We want to urge all Advent Christians around the world to encourage one another with prayer, offerings, and visits. The cause of World Missions deserves our full support. ❑

Dorothy Warriner and her husband Austin have served for over thirty-five years as Advent Christian missionaries. Earlier this year, they completed a one year special assignment at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

Stress Reliever: Just Say "No"

Judy Waggoner

ON A BALMY, cloudless day, a successful business person sways in a backyard hammock, a frosty glass of lemonade within reach. Is this a stressful situation? Perhaps. If the executive likes to keep busy all the time, lounging around may feel extremely frustrating, nonproductive, and upsetting.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, stress is an unavoidable fact of life and unique to each individual. An activity that is stressful to one person may be relaxing to another. Stress comes from both physical and mental (or emotional) activity. Too much physical stress is not apt to cause serious diseases, but too much emotional stress has been found to cause high blood pressure, ulcers, and even heart disease.

Psychologists have developed coping strategies for handling the inevitable stress in daily life. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, clinical psychologists and codirectors of the Minirth-Meier Clinic West, state that establishing clear boundaries is essential to a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

"The most basic boundary-setting word is *no*," say Cloud and Townsend, authors of the book *Boundaries* (Zondervan, 1992). "It lets others know that you exist apart from them. . ."

Saying no is the first step in relieving the stress that serving other people can cause says Patricia Sprinkle, author of *Women Who Do Too Much: Stress and the Myth of the Superwoman* (Zondervan 1992). It "involves admitting we are not indispensable," says Sprinkle, "and it may even result in something very scary for some of us: free time."

Since stress cannot be avoided, it is important for each individual to determine what activities or situations constitute stress and to develop strategies for dealing with it. Saying no to certain stress-causing demands may be just the place to start. ❑

Zondervan Press Service

Running Away

Scott Hubbard
Elkton, Md.

Discovering that Jesus loves me

Suffering God's judgment
My pain is my reward,
For walking down the dark path
And of my own accord.

He gave me the knowledge
Between right and wrong.
But I fell into temptation;
Alone I wasn't strong.

I let my frustrations
Take control of me;
Violence and darkness
Were all I could see.

My loneliness and anger
Drove me to the edge.
Should have turned to the Lord;
I ran from him instead.

I spent so much time running,
Running from myself;
Now I'm down on my knees praying
Deliver me from Hell.

Please God help me!
I beg of you my sweet Lord,
Have mercy on my soul.
Please give me one more chance
To be called in the final roll.

My heart has been wounded;
Please make me whole again.
I need you in my life, Lord,
I need you for my friend.

Save me from myself, Lord,
See me through the day.
Without pain or anger
Let your love light my way.

I beg of your protection,
Hold me through the night.
Cast out all my demons,
Give me strength to fight.

I place myself in your hands, Lord,
Please take away my pain.
Fill this empty hole in my heart
And make me whole again.

Life has never been easy for me. Yes, I know right from wrong. But I found myself falling short. It started back in middle school — I never cared so much about appearance as I did feelings. I used to be ridiculed just for caring. In the end, I started putting myself down.

Being an emotional person, I couldn't deal with rejection, and I experienced plenty of that. So I turned to drugs and alcohol for escape. I was always the life of the party until somebody made me mad. Then I'd start a fight.

Drinking alcohol became a way of life; I wanted love, couldn't find it. So I got drunk. I became more violent as I grew older. I knew something was wrong with me but I always blamed it on the rest of the world.

Eventually, I gave up and checked myself into a rehabilitation center. While there, I accepted Christ as my Savior and opened myself up to God.

When I came out, I met a girl, fell in love, and everything seemed good. But the old habits were still there and we ended up fighting constantly.

After we broke up, I fell hard. I didn't care about anything. A year after, I was drinking more than ever. People tried to help me but I was so blind I couldn't even see myself.

Then one night, as I was drinking with some friends, I got into a fight. I stabbed one of them. My jaw was almost broken. I was incarcerated. I had lost all control of myself— all for alcohol.

Still, through it all, the Lord was always right there. If only I had turned to him instead of the bottle. But, the Lord forgives even though people might not. So I wrote this poem, a prayer to my Lord. I still have to face trial. I may have to do some hard time in prison. But I know if I keep the Lord in my heart, I'll come out fine.

Scott Hubbard is a part of the Elkton, Md., Advent Christian Church where Rev. Shannon Hall serves as pastor. He wrote this poem and article last March while awaiting trial.

John Perkins continued from page 11

the American evangelical church, what do you see as two or three important priorities we need to concentrate on in the next five to ten years?

First, we need a better understanding of the gospel, that the gospel is the physical demonstration of God's love and we must be a witness to that love. We need to understand that the essence of the gospel is God's love made visible. I don't think most people who are preaching today understand that the cross of Christ is the greatest demonstration of God's love.

To follow God means to demonstrate to society that you've been loved by God. And you do that by loving others. That's the number one thing evangelicals need to do in the coming years.

But we also must understand the purpose of the gospel is to reconcile people to God and to each other across racial, cultural, social, and economic barriers. Reconciliation is our work as Christians. And as we understand reconciliation, we—black and white, Jew and Gentile—learn to love each other and work together.

And we begin to understand that we are peacemakers. Peace occurs as the kingdom of God comes forth and extends. I think churches need to once again see their communities as parishes where they are called to demonstrate the power of the gospel. That's got to happen in a given place and it must be more than a building mentality. You simply cannot have a downtown building where people from the suburbs commute in once a week for a Sunday morning service. That's not a parish. That's not the kingdom of God penetrating into the lives of broken and hurting people in our communities. The kingdom comes when broken people are healed in the context of a parish in a given place. We must come back to a parish concept of ministry in our local churches.

These are the issues we have to deal with in the days ahead: Understanding the gospel as the visible demonstration of God's love. Seeing that the purpose of the gospel is reconciling people with God and with each other. Understanding that as reconciliation happens, we will see peace in our community. And finally, grasping that the local church must be a parish that serves its communities and seeks to extend God's kingdom by healing broken lives.

Isaiah speaks of the lion and the lamb lying down together in God's kingdom. The kingdom is a place of joy and peace where no harm comes to people. We need to extend that kingdom into our communities.

And to make that happen, we need to stop confining the gospel to the four walls of our building and see

continued on page 18

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

October

1 Praise God for an encouraging and inspiring Advent Christian **General Conference** triennial session held at Aurora University.

2 Pray that God will guide Advent Christian **leaders** from Japan, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, and the United States as they prepare to meet next spring to plan future strategy for Advent Christian mission work in Asia.

3 Praise God for productive visits from **Japanese and Filipino** Advent Christian conference leaders during the General Conference convention.

4 Pray that God will continue to call Advent Christians around the world to consider **missionary service**.

5 Praise God for the commitment of **Harry and Etta Soucy** as they prepare to serve Jesus Christ and Advent Christian World Missions at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

6 Pray that the **Soucys** will adjust well to their new surroundings and that God will richly bless their work at the college.

7 Praise God for the effective service **David Vignali** gave as coordinator for the General Conference sessions last June.

8 Pray for **Margaret Helms** as she works to develop a radio ministry in the Philippines.

9 Praise God for the commitment to Christian service that students at **Oro Bible College** have made.

10 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and leaders in the **Philippines** will sense God's encouragement and direction as they serve Christ.

11 As **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** prepare to return to the United States this fall, praise God for the many years of effective service they have given to the cause of Christ in Japan and the Philippines through Advent Christian missions.

12 Pray for **Ruth Soucier** as she teaches English and communicates the gospel to her Japanese students.

13 Praise God for the commitment of **Japanese** Ad-

vent Christians to the task of proclaiming the gospel around the world to those who don't know Jesus Christ.

14 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they work to establish a new Advent Christian congregation in the West Kobe area of Japan.

15 Praise God for several work teams from Advent Christian congregations that have gone to **Mexico**.

16 Pray for students at **Tecate Bible Institute** as they prepare for Christian service.

17 Pray for **Alberto Gomez** as he provides leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in the El Florido area of Tijuana, Mexico.

18 Pray that God will open opportunities for Advent Christian missions to expand ministry in **Latin America**.

19 Praise God for the continuing disciplemaking and leadership training work being done by Advent Christian missionaries in **India** through the School of Evangelism.

20 Pray that **Beryl Joy Hollis**, **Barbara White**, and **Marion Damon** will sense God's presence and guidance as they serve Christ in India today.

21 Pray that Advent Christian **pastors and leaders** will be sensitive to God's guidance and leading today.

22 Pray that God will give strength and direction to those working at the Advent Christian **denominational offices** in Charlotte.

23 Pray that regional superintendents **Richard Thurston, W. James Smith, Hal Vannoy, Clinton Taber,** and **Larry Withrow** will experience God's wisdom and leading in their work today.

24 Praise God that lives are being touched for Jesus Christ through the work of **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** at the Memphis, Tenn., Advent Christian Church.

25 Pray for eleven young people from the **Memphis** congregation who received Christ as their Savior while attending Camp Sonshine at the Appalachian Advent Christian Campground.

26 Pray for World Mission Director **Harold Patterson** as he seeks God's continuing direction for the work of Advent Christian missions.

27 Pray for **Frank Jewett** as he leads a team to work with Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in Nigeria this fall.

28 Pray that God will intervene in the hearts of leaders of the warring factions in **Liberia** and bring a resolution to their conflict.

29 Pray that God will give strength and protection to **Liberian** Advent Christians, many of whom have fled to the Ivory Coast.

30 Praise God that evangelical Christians in **Liberia** are attempting to bring God's peace to their war-torn land.

31 On this day when so many celebrate the powers of darkness, praise God that he has revealed his Light to the world through **Jesus Christ**.

John Perkins continued from page 17

that it applies in business, in politics, and in our human relationships.

We need to do that quickly. And we have to get away from one-dimensional politics. A lot of black folks get frustrated when they hear white Christians talking about abortion only. Now don't get me wrong. I'm against abortion. But that's not the only issue. What about these children who live in a world filled with violence? What about the poverty that affects millions of people in our country? We need a gospel that grapples with the injustice that so many people experience. As Christians get involved in the political process, we need a broad view that's more than one-dimensional. Our faith has to touch all of life. ❑

Worth the Trip? continued from page 6

Worth the investment

Our last day in San Felipe came too soon. We had energy, good humor, and food left over. It was the one time we gave things away. We packaged up our extra supplies, some Spanish New Testaments, and some candy, and went to homes in the barrio in the name of Christ. The candy was enthusiastically received by the children. The food was accepted and needed by the parents. But the big success was the New Testaments. Most had never owned or even held a portion of Scripture in their lives. Later we could see the man across the street from the clinic in his 10 by 30 meter house-lot of dust and sand. He was pacing back and forth with that Testament, his head down, as though he was looking at a rare treasure in his hand. I don't even know if he could read. Had he already read it? Was he pondering its truths? Was he making a decision? I'll probably never know. But God knows. And there are other volunteer "missionaries" from another church with him even now who have been led of the Lord to give a week or two of their time to make a difference in his life. And the harvest will be reaped.

I pray that, as you read this article, your heart will be stirred to try something new for Christ. Perhaps it will be a short-term journey that will change your life, make a real difference, and give you a first-hand glimpse of "missions." It will be worth the investment, I promise you. ❑

Gary Bailey lives in Rochester, N.H., with his wife Gale and his daughter Karen. He teaches at Learning Skills Academy, a private high school for the learning disabled. He also writes and does church growth consulting work.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

If the spiritual relationships you have in Jesus' name don't give you rest, but rather make you more tired as time goes on, then they aren't representing Jesus' purpose accurately. He came to lift from the backs of tired people the burden of trying hard to earn God's approval.

—*David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen in* Tired of Trying to Measure Up

Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide. It is in vain to say that democracy is less vain, less proud, less selfish, less ambitious, or less avaricious than aristocracy or monarchy. It is not true, in fact, and nowhere appears in history. Those passions are the same in all men, under all forms of simple government, and, when unchecked, produce the same effects of fraud, violence, and cruelty. . .

—*John Quincy Adams quoted by Harry Figgie in* Bankruptcy 1995

For what the gospel announces, according to the New Testament, is not just what Christ offers people today, but what he once did to make this offer possible. The apostolic gospel brings together the past and the present, the once and the now, historical event and contemporary experience. It declares not only that Jesus saves, but that he died for our sins, and was raised from death, in order to be able to do so. The gospel is not preached if the saving power is proclaimed and the saving events omitted, especially the cross.

—*John R.W. Stott in* The Contemporary Christian

There is nothing in which humans resemble God more truly than in doing good to others.

—*John Calvin*

Jesus called us to self-denial without self-hatred. Self-denial is simply a way of coming to understand that we do not have to have our own way. Our happiness is not dependent upon getting what we want.

—*Richard Foster*

Communism. . . granted "rights" to a select few—a political elite-but denied rights to the masses of its citizens, even the right to live. This was the great contradiction of Marxism. It promised equality for all its citizens and ended up denying equality—developing a system which provided enormous privileges to a few and enslaved the vast majority.

—*Richard Halverson in* Perspective

The true mark of kingdom leadership is servanthood, not title, position, or the coercive use of power. The kingdom leader following the example of Christ has to be willing to be last for the sake of all, actually the 'slave' of all.

—*Tom Eisenman*

Most of my life has been built around the idea that my value depends on what I do. I made it through school. I earned my degrees and awards and I made my career. Yes, with many others, I fought my way up to a little success, a little popularity, and a little power. But. . . how violent that journey was. So marked by rivalry and competition, so pervaded with compulsion and obsession, so spotted with moments of suspicion, jealousy, resentment, and revenge.

Oh sure, most of what I did was called ministry, the ministry of justice and peace, the ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation, the ministry of healing and wholeness. But when those who want peace are as interested in success, popularity, and power as those who want war, what then is the real difference between war and peace?

—*Henri Nouwen in* World Vision *(August/September 1988)*

The more you are hung-up on what others think about you, the more inhibited you become, and the less likely you are to have the freedom to be yourself. Consequence? You will be unhappy.

—*Archibald Hart*

Though he "had all authority in heaven and earth," Jesus never pulled rank nor insisted on his way. His leadership was not lordship but servanthood. He preferred others and deferred to their needs. He led by service, gentle persuasion, and love.

His model of authority and leadership is not a mere softening of secular leadership, but a radically different disposition. His call to leadership is a call to humility, self-death, and servitude to others.

—*David Roper*

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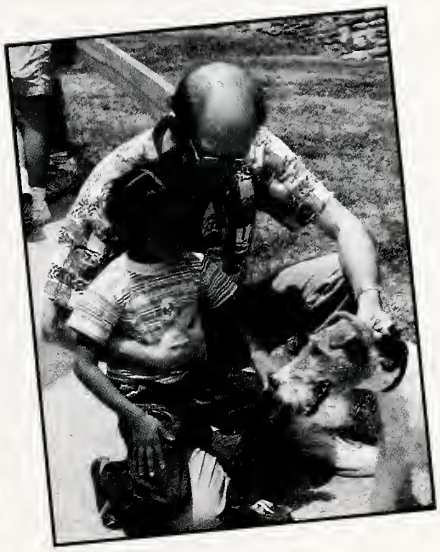
October 1993

A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES



First Advent Christian Church, Lenoir, North Carolina

Living Water Advent Christian Church, Memphis, Tennessee

Showing inner city youth the love of Christ

Features

A Tale of Two Churches 4

Two Advent Christian congregations: One in the center of a major American city and one in a small town. Nelson Melvin explores what they have in common and how they've become linked through an innovative ministry called Camp Sonshine.

Attleboro Congregation Rallies to Flood Relief 8

The missions committee at the Attleboro, Mass., Advent Christian Church wanted to do something tangible to assist victims of natural disasters. Little did they know their concern would multiply into a major effort to help victims of the great Midwest flood of 1993. Eleanor Chew tells their story.

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On the Cover

Camp Sonshine provided an opportunity for young people from the inner city of Memphis to hear about Christ's love for them.

—photos by Nelson Melvin

Volume 41, Number 8

Advent Christian
Witness

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Too Many Laws; Too Little Justice

I'M A PERSON WHO regularly watches television news. In fact, I like to watch more than one newscast—especially on major news stories. Why? Because editors (myself included) and television journalists all have strong biases that color how they process information and report the news.

But during early August, I had a tough time turning on the news. Because every time I'd watch, there would be the same lead story—a two-year old-girl at the center of a bitter custody battle between two sets of parents. You could see it coming. Despite the fact the adoptive parents had for over two years had custody of the child they called Jessica DeBoers, the biological parents legally had the upper hand. And when the Supreme Court refused to hear the case, you knew television would broadcast the heart-wrenching separation scenes for hours on end. After a few seconds, I couldn't stand to watch a family being ripped apart. The law was followed but justice was nowhere to be found.

I could write about a growing bias against adoption in our society. That would be easy. There are special interest groups who see adoption as a greater evil than the horrors of abortion. And federal and state adoption laws are at best confusing and contradictory. But this event raises an even more important issue: We have hundreds of thousands of state and federal laws in this country. We get thousands of new ones every year. Yet, we don't see much justice anymore. Our claim of "liberty and justice for all" seems detached from reality.

We live in a society where criminal offenders wind up serving only a small portion of their sentences for serious, violent crimes; where the needs of crime victims are rarely considered; and where hiring an attorney even for simple matters can cost thousands of dollars. The number of civil lawsuits has exploded. We've all heard the bizarre examples of crazy lawsuits and outrageous monetary awards. And because legal costs have become so high, a favorite tactic of individuals and special interest groups is to drag out the proceedings with the hope of bankrupting their opponents. That happens all the time in modern-day America.

And it will continue until we realize that justice is not related to how many laws and regulations we put in our legal codes. In fact, the more laws and regulations we pass, the less justice we'll see! Why? Because justice is directly related to wisdom. And as the writer of Proverbs says, "The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom" (Proverbs 15:33). Justice in a family, a church, a community, or a society ultimately depends on the Christian virtues of wisdom, tolerance, patience, self-control, and love. And justice comes when we see Jesus, not ourselves, as the center of life.

Perhaps it's time Christians encourage our society to stop passing hundreds of new laws and regulations and simplify an already complex and confusing legal code. Perhaps it's time for us to remind attorneys and judges that they're dealing with people, not numbers and statistics. Then we might see less of the pain, suffering, and injustice that Jessica DeBoers and her adoptive parents had to endure at the expense of an out-of-control legal system. ❑

Correction

IN THE June 1993 issue, we misidentified the author of "Serving God: What's Our Attitude?" as Roy Morrison, chaplain of Baker Correctional Institution in Olustee, Fla. The author is Thomas, an immate at Baker Correctional Institution. We apologize for the mistake.

A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES

First Advent Christian Church, Lenoir, North Carolina

Nelson Melvin
Charlotte, N.C.

YOU WOULD find it difficult to find two churches more divergent than First Advent Christian Church, Lenoir, North Carolina, and Living Water Advent Christian Church, Memphis, Tennessee. The colonial architecture of First Church, with its red bricks, tall white columns and its steeple pointing toward heaven stands in stark contrast to the little church in Memphis. Living Water's interior is neat and clean, but its exterior is purposely not improved so as not to encourage vandals and thieves. Both church and parsonage are in a drug-infested, high crime area, while First Church enjoys a much more tranquil environment. More than half the members of this white congregation are senior adults, while eighty percent of those who attend Living Water are African-American young people and children. Until four years ago, the two congregations had only one thing in common—Jesus. Now they have at least two that closely bond them, even though they are located more than 600 miles apart—Jesus and Camp Sonshine.

Ask anyone how it all began and you will hear the name Suzanne Earp. God gave her the vision for this ministry. I asked Suzanne and this is what she shared.

"I accepted the Lord as my Savior when I was ten years old, grew up in the church and have always been active teaching Sunday school, DVBS director—those kind of activities—but it wasn't until about five years ago that I felt that I had really turned my whole life over to the Lord. I surrendered regarding missions. I didn't know what that meant, but I was available for whatever He wanted me to do. Within a week friends were visiting us and as they were leaving the wife said, 'My husband and I are going to Mexico to lead in a Bible school' and casually added, 'Would you like to go with us?' My husband, who is a lieutenant with the fire department, worked his schedule so that he could drive the van. About a hundred kids came to this backyard Bible school and 47 accepted Jesus as Savior. I had a new awareness of the hunger that needy people have for Jesus.

"I told my pastor, 'I'm ready,' not knowing what God had in mind for us. Pastor Francis Ssebikindu was one of the speakers at the mission conference when I surrendered my life for the mission field and God worked through our pastor and World Mis-

sions Director Harold Patterson to guide us toward Camp Sonshine."

Suzanne's family witnessed that this vision was of God, as did the pastor in Memphis. The official board gave their sanction and church members responded to the appeal for fifty-dollar donations to sponsor a camper. Workers were enlisted and the dream was becoming a reality. Sixty young people arrived in a broken-down church bus that almost made it up the mountain to the Advent Christian Campground in Blowing Rock.

Over the past four years there have been a lot of changes. Experience has been a great teacher. The purpose continues to be "a special place for children and teenagers to learn about Jesus, the Son of God." Fifty-five have given their hearts to the Lord. The program continues much the same, including worship, Bible study and memorization, crafts and recreation. Camp Sonshine follows Vacation Bible School at First Church enabling the church to get double duty from some of their supplies. Area churches also provide ministry at the evening services. Stephen Martin, youth director at First Church said, "This year Berea started the camp with a dynamic service, including skits. The second night, the kids from Memphis put on the program and their pastor, Francis Ssebikindu ministered, and the Holy Spirit came with power. Nine gave their hearts to the Lord. Probably that was most of those who had not made a first-time decision since possibly two-thirds of the campers have been here in past years. The next night the young people from our church presented a special musical program with rap music, and the fourth night the young people from Calvary sang and their pastor was the speaker. This has been a tremendous camp."

Barbara Davis and Eurline Martin accepted responsibility for the meals, enlisting the kitchen staff and solicited donations. Local merchants and national companies such as Wendy's, McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Walmart became aware of what Camp Sonshine was all about and made donations. The ladies of First Church baked cakes and others donated food and supplies.

Has it made a difference?

The transformation over the four year period has been nothing short of amazing. Suzanne recalled that the first year the children cussed at one another, threw rocks at each other, and called each other names. They seemed impossible to control. She related one trying experience.

"At the beginning evening service four years ago I was sitting on the front row trying to keep some rowdy boys quiet. Hopelessly impossible. Tears trickled down my cheeks. Willy saw my tears and decided to be the enforcer. "Who hurt Miss Suzanne? You hurt her? You hurt her?" He interrogated the others. "Who hurt Miss Suzanne?" I explained that no one had hurt me. I was crying because I couldn't keep them quiet. Then Will ordered, "You guys all shut up. Don't nobody make Miss Suzanne cry." Then when I saw how much he cared for me, the tears really did flow."

Steve Martin shared that as they prepared for bed that first night four years ago, some of the boys stretched out on the floor. That's the only place they have to sleep at home. It would be hard to imagine the environment in which these children survive.

The camp experience has made an impact for good. Lois Mikeal, who has taught kindergarten for 30 years observed, "I have seen them mature.

Living Water Advent Christian Church, Memphis, Tennessee

They have grown in their faith. They are so well-behaved and so loving."

Everyone wins at Camp Sonshine

The boys and girls win big. At the awards banquet on the final night everyone receives at least one award from his or her teacher. The group with the neatest cabin is rewarded. And before getting on the bus to return home, each camper is presented with a Sonshine T-shirt, designed by Heidi Martin. The outstanding boy and girl campers go home with a bicycle, a gift from Steve Earp. This is his ministry. It began when he purchased a bicycle in excellent condition to help a friend, then got the idea of presenting it to the camper who by attitude, obedience and cooperation helped to make it a great camp. It was a boy's bike. What if a girl won it? Steve purchased a girl's bike. This year he continued the tradition.

The people who make it happen win too. Those who mow the grounds, fix the broken water pipes, and clean the buildings, along with those who cook the meals, the teachers and those whose gifts provide the finances have an invaluable promise—"As you do it unto one of the least of these..." In addition, they are showered with the love and gratitude of those whom they serve.

When asked what they liked about camp, Arkisha said, "I like it when we go to the chapel and when we have crafts." "I like camp because we go to a lot of nice places and because we learn about Jesus," added Timothy. Tyrone Harris, the oldest camper, has been to camp all four years. This is how he expressed himself: "Camp Sonshine is very exciting. I also love the staff. They are so kind and loving. It is a lot of fun having two races together loving each other. You don't even see the color. The Bible lessons have been great. I accepted Jesus here four years ago. It has been a trying life but I'll make it."

First Church is a winner too. Rev. Ed Hickel and his wife Ricki assumed the pastorate last year just in time to attend the after-camp presentation program. They were thrilled to see the laypersons so committed to evangelism and missions. The cost of camp averages between four and five thousand dollars a year and most of that money comes from donations from church members.

Living Water Church is a big, big winner. Pastor Francis and his wife Lyne are from Uganda. They fled the persecution of Idi Amin Dada, met in Virginia, and married. He is a graduate of Berkshire Christian College and received his Master of Theology degree from Westminster Seminary. They have been at Living Water seven years. Isolated by distance from other Advent Christian churches, one can only imagine what it means to have another church family bond with you.

Theirs is a difficult and, to some degree, a dangerous ministry. There are a few women who have remained faithful for at least forty years and there are a couple of men. About ninety young people and children make up the congregation. The pastor drives about two hours on Sunday morning to bring the children to Sunday school and church, which concludes about 1:00 p.m. After service Lyne prepares a dinner at the parsonage where they feed "a bunch of the kids." (Some of the children have nothing to eat and many hardly ever have a hot meal.) Sunday afternoon is a social time followed by a prayer time.

Prostitution, extreme poverty, drunkenness, incest, rape, housing that should be condemned, overcrowding, with eight to twelve living in a two-room house are factors in the environment in which this shepherd guards his little flock. There have been heartbreaks and failures, of course, but there are also successes. Three young people are in college and many are growing spiritually.

The First Church family has chosen to express their love and support to Francis and Lyne in this battle for souls. Camp Sonshine is only part of their outreach. Letters, birthday cards, school supplies and Christmas gifts continue to let the children know that they are loved. Last Christmas, sixteen people drove in vans to Memphis with two presents for every child and spent the weekend with their other "family." The travelers were filled with the warmth and goodness that flowed in the Living Water congregation and praised God for their worship experience there. Being there was a wonderful experience for the First Church group.

I want to be with God when Jesus comes

This love has made an impression. A man could not comprehend that his two boys could go to camp and it not cost anything. He is now active in the church. A mother is now

faithfully serving the Lord because of her children going to camp.

This story began by relating what God can do when one sixth-grade teacher surrendered all to him. It raises the inescapable question: Does He have all of you? It also excites the imagination with visions of each of us being mightily used of him.

This story is much more than the story of one person. That was just the beginning. It is, as you have observed, the story of many obedient believers responding to an opportunity, ready to meet a need and doing whatever is necessary. Here is a moving example:

In 1991, the worn-out church bus was only 40 miles out of Memphis when it died by the roadside with a load of disappointed kids. Pastor Francis walked to a phone and shared the bad news with then Pastor Jack Jones. He then called some churches in Memphis in an effort to arrange for the children to return home. Pastor Sarttle of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Memphis wanted to help, but all of his buses were committed so he arranged with a commercial bus line at the cost of $3500 to transport the children to North Carolina. Friend, if that kind of unselfish generosity doesn't light your fire, your wood is wet.

This is really more than the tale of two churches. It is an example of the oneness Jesus prayed for in John 17. Its purpose is captured in a moment following an evening camp service.

Little Lizzie was among those who went to the altar. Suzanne went outside with her and asked, "Lizzie, haven't you accepted Jesus?" "Yes," the little girl answered, "and I've been baptized, but I've been sinning and I want to be with God when Jesus comes." That is what Camp Sonshine is all about. ❑

Nelson Melvin is former editor of the Advent Christian Witness *and of* Voice, *the magazine of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. He and his wife Hannah live in Charlotte.*

Missions Watch

David McCarthy

The Joy of Service

Austin and Dorothy Warriner (Japan): Austin and Dorothy returned to Japan in April after spending the school year on our Philippines field. They visited our India work *en route*. Before their departure the Warriners hosted three Japanese pastors and took them on a tour of Advent Christian churches in the Philippines.

One image Dorothy will carry back to Japan is the Filipino children. She comments, "I never cease to be impressed by how they enjoy life although they have so little. In the settlement next door everyone is up and about by 6:00 a.m. and it quickly becomes a beehive of activity. The children are outside all the time, playing and laughing, jumping and holding hands."

Steven and Ann Lay (Japan): In March, papers were signed for the purchase of property in West Kobe. Several men, friends of the Lays, have now flown to Japan at their own expense to help build a mission house that will serve as headquarters for a new evangelistic outreach. The Lays report a friendly response from people who live in the community in which the new property is located.

George and Beverly Teshera (Philippines): The Tesheras recently returned home after eight-months overseas. In a recent letter, they told the story of a co-worker, Nellie Gamayon. "The young woman had just shared her testimony in our Bible college chapel service. She had opened her soul, revealing a struggle with self-pity and discouragement. Nellie told us about wanting to walk away from her job, her family, even the church. But God spoke to her. She remembered that it was for her and the other students that Christ had died, and as she thought about him, her heart was touched. The reality of his presence took control and gave her strength to face the tomorrows of her life."

"Our minds flashed back more than twenty years to a time when she came to Sunday school with her grandmother. By the age of fifteen she was teaching a Sunday school class, and by eighteen she was serving as superintendent. She had gone on to Oro Bible College. Today she serves the college as Dean of Student Affairs and is one of the most valued and respected members of the faculty. She is deeply committed to Christ, determined and efficient, yet very open and transparent."

"This is the joy of serving on a mission field. To sit side-by-side with a co-worker who is a highly respected leader in the college makes your heart well up within, and you know it is God who has established the work for his glory."

"That is what missions is all about: touching lives, building relationships, and encouraging one another. We are all part of a team that continues to mold lives for Christ."

Beryl Joy Hollis (India): Beryl Joy was hospitalized for several days this year due to an allergic reaction. She has recovered and is keeping a full schedule of teaching, speaking, and administrative activities. She reports that the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Velacheri Church was covered by local television, and that the Mambalam Church celebrated fifty years of service by dedicating a large new building. ❑

Attleboro Congregation Rallies to Flood Relief

Eleanor Chew
Holbrook, Mass.

WHEN THE Missions Committee at the Attleboro, Massachusetts, Advent Christian Church had a vision last March to begin collecting clothes, food, bedding, linens and other household items for people in need, we had no idea the impact this would have on us as a congregation.

For our first project we shipped Bibles to Dominica, an island off South America; supplies to Appalachia; and Bibles with a relocating church member to Iowa. But our goal was to have on hand a reserve of supplies we could use at a moment's notice for emergency needs. We were provided with free storage for all our supplies and thought we had a sufficient amount to handle an emergency. Then in July, floods hit the Midwest and thousands of people were devastated by the flooding.

With $175.00 in our Missions Fund, members wondered how we could send a truckload of supplies. Brendan Vigorito, chairman of our Missions Committee, felt the Lord would supply two trucks to ship what we had. After appealing for a truck on the Channel 12 news, we had an offer of a truck and driver who would donate time and cover shipping expenses. But as we started loading the 48-foot trailer, only three feet of the truck was filled with what we had collected.

Not humanly possible

We couldn't believe how empty the truck was. We quickly realized that our goal was not humanly possible no matter what we tried. But God had other ideas. With the Lord's intervention we were reminded how with God everything is possible when you trust him to provide. And he provided all we could possibly need and more.

The appeal went out over local radio and television, and newspapers. Response from people in the community was immediate and overwhelming. Floods came by the hundreds with clothes, toys, linens, food, furniture, and cleaning supplies.

God filled that 48-foot trailer in six days. And there was such an abundance of food and supplies that we sent another truck to Iowa a week later with the supplies that would not fit in the first truck. People from the community continued bringing items that we could give to Iowa flood victims and many thanked our church for being willing to undertake such an important project. We reminded people that we could not do it without their donations and concern.

Two pallets of frozen muffins, cakes, and cookies were donated and while we wondered how to keep the food frozen, the Lord provided freezer space at Friendly's and McDonald's restaurants around the corner from the church so the food would still be edible when it was shipped.

But could we keep the food cold in the back of the 100-plus degree truck for a 1,300 mile trip? We purchased sheets of Styrofoam and fashioned an original cooler in the middle of the truck to help keep the food cool at least part of the way.

When they removed the food, it was still cold after the long trip. The Lord provided a homeless shelter that used most of the food and handed out the rest.

A spiritual mission

Sigourney, Iowa was the destination for the first truck, where members of the First Baptist Church were ready to accept and hand out the supplies. According to Brendan Vigorito, "Sigourney was exactly the right location at the right time with the right needs."

Lisa Olson flew out from the church to meet Brendan and John Papagni, the truck driver from DART Transportation, to help with distribution. During this time people were praying that God would provide the people he had chosen to receive the supplies and the accompanying message of God's love. Our feeling as a church was that this was a spiritual mission. By providing in some small way for people's physical needs, we hoped to provide for their spiritual needs as well. Each person who received supplies was offered a Bible with verses underlined and tracts inserted into those pages so they would see the plan of salvation.

After receiving one call and realizing there was no opportunity to witness for God they prayed for another source. Then God provided a church with a pregnancy counseling center who helped and told people about God's love. The supplies and Bibles were given to this pastor and his wife.

The devastation to homes—odors from the mud, sewage, and mold—was horrible. It was difficult to think about people returning to their homes. The soil was hard, the foliage from the trees was gone, and farmlands were devastated. It looked like a bomb had been dropped there.

Yet, through all their losses, the folks we met were appreciative of even the smallest token of concern, and the Lord met each person's request for supplies. One man asked if God was trying to tell him something as he realized there had to be more to life than the material possessions he had lost. He told us that God had his attention now.

Christianity Today magazine received the second truckload of supplies for distribution in the Des Moines, Iowa area and they were "thrilled that people in Massachusetts were willing to help them out in such a large way and were working with local churches to pass the materials out as quickly as possible," according to a letter our church received from them.

Kingdom impact

In Attleboro, we were able to reach out with God's message of love to more than 100 families who did not have Bibles when they came with donations. Children as well as adults collected supplies. One group of children took their little red wagon out asking their neighbors for food and clothes for the flood victims, and bringing this to the church. Another boy, who realized how much he had, brought his glove, his baseball, and his tennis ball and asked "Could you find a child who has none and give them to him?" We were able to meet two families, one through the tennis ball and another with the glove and baseball.

The week that our members were in Iowa there was not one drop of rain in an area that had seen nothing but rain for weeks. The Lord showed our team that their mission was accomplished as the thunder and rain started again moments after they had given a young girl the last stuffed animal they had and asked her to take care of it.

We sent a third trailer and Mr. Jim McCaungahan from the Southern Baptist Convention has received it and is distributing the supplies in the Bridgeton, Missouri area.

God has shown us that we may never know the impact this project

had for his kingdom, but that no matter the location or size of our church our task is never complete. As long as he provides us with an opportunity to meet needs then we must respond. ❑

Eleanor Chew is active at the Attleboro, Mass., Advent Christian Church, and is past president of the Tremont Advent Christian Campmeeting Association.

Seeds of Hope

A Final Request

Fern Smith
Lewiston, Idaho

A SENSE OF impending death hung heavily in the small bedroom where Gabe lay. The family had gathered and stood in stony silence as they watched life ebbing away from this father, husband, and grandfather. The only sounds were muffled chokes and controlled sobs holding back a volcano of grief longing to erupt. Waiting!

Then, as if purposely, Gabe slowly felt for his daughter's hand. Determinedly, he opened his eyes and turned his head toward her. With great effort he simply said, "Take care of Rusty for me," and he died. Rusty was his young grandson, the joy of the old man's life. Cancer had claimed yet another victim.

This kind of story tugs at the heart. Yet it's not an uncommon scene for those who have chosen to die at home. Maggie Callanon and Patricia Kelly have co-authored *Final Gifts*. They have worked with terminally ill patients for many years and have identified what is known as Nearing Death Awareness. They relate that near the end, patients often share significant expressions or requests. They emphasize that those messages should be listened to carefully. It's putting things in order, looking after the welfare of those left behind. It is known as a "final request" which generally mirrors what is of great importance to the one departing. It often leaves the one of whom the favor was asked with a feeling of great honor and determination to carry out the wishes.

Something more

I was Gabe's caregiver on this particular night and after his body had been removed, the bed stripped and medication disposed of, I stood for a moment recalling the scene I had just witnessed. I felt a reluctance to leave. There was something more for me there.

I returned home about 4:00 a.m. As I relaxed and reflected on my relationship with Gabe and his family, God spoke to my heart. I was reminded of Jesus when he did a similar thing. As he hung on the cross he looked down and seeing his mother there said, "Dear woman, here is your son." And to John, "Here is your mother." A final request; "Take care of her, John." Those words came from the compassionate heart of our Lord for his mother, Mary. I thought about Gabe.

Then I remembered another time, just before our Lord's ascension. As Jesus was preparing to leave, he made his last and final request. He spoke to his disciples on behalf of a lost world. What did he say? "Go, make disciples."

With these words of Jesus clearly in my mind, I realized there had been a lesson for me in Gabe's room. God's Spirit touched me. With a lump in my throat, I knew I too had been the recipient of a final request. But from the Son of God? Me, a 20th-century Christian? I was not sure. Could I do it? Make disciples? I cannot forget what he asked of me. God drew me into a closer walk, a greater purpose. I felt as the daughter must have in the story.

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A new feature

In this issue, we welcome Fern Smith as a regular columnist on our Women's Ministries pages. Fern lives in Lewiston, Idaho, and with her husband, Western Region Superintendent W. James Smith, has been active in ministry for over thirty years. Her column will appear in every other issue.

Women's Ministries

A MOTHER'S PRAYER

Shirley W. Belleranti
Mesa, Ariz.

BYE, MOM. See you later."

I look up from the book I'm reading. "Have a good day." It's a saying that's become trite with overuse, and yet I do mean it.

I return to the book, but the printed words fade before my eyes as I listen for the garage door to open. A few moments later I hear it slide shut with a "clunk" and then the hum of the motor as Linda drives away. I close my eyes and silently repeat the comforting and familiar words: "Please take care of her, Lord! Watch over her, guide her and keep her safe. Thank you."

Then my burden lifted I return to my reading.

A few minutes later a phone call from a friend reminds me of my prayer.

"I'm so tired!" she complains. "Dave was late getting in last night

and I just can't sleep until I know he's safely home. Thank goodness I have only one to worry about! I'd be a nervous wreck if I had three like you do. Do you ever *stop* worrying about them?"

A source of comfort

I paused a moment. "It's not so much worry as it is concern. And I do have a source of comfort. I pray a lot."

"Yeah—don't we all!" She laughs ruefully.

"Really. I mean it." I tell her about my simple prayer and the peace of mind it gives me.

"Well..." she pauses uncertainly, "you hear so many horror stories, and I'm sure some of those people pray, too."

"Probably. There aren't any guarantees. But that's where faith comes in. It comforts me to ask God to watch over them. When I put my concerns in his hands, it seems that my own mind and heart are free to turn to other things.

"Do you know Psalm 121, the one that begins, 'I will lift up my eyes unto the hills?' That and the Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my shepherd,' have helped me over many rough spots through the years. Read them, Peggy. You'll see what I mean. And the next time Dave goes out, ask the Lord to take care of him. I think you'll be surprised at how much better you'll feel."

"I'm a reasonably good Christian," she replied thoughtfully, "but I guess I've saved my prayers for bigger things. I'll give it a try."

Later, as I go about my work, I think about this matter of asking God to guide and protect my children, trying to remember when I started praying for them in this particular way. Linda is the youngest, but she's a woman now, capable of making her own decisions. She's a careful, conscientious driver, but accidents do happen, even to careful drivers. And there are so many *other* hazards my loved ones must face every day.

God's help needed

I realize (with a sense of surprise) that I've been praying this way for nearly two decades, ever since our eldest reached the age when outside influences and peer pressures seemed more important to her than parental approval. I prayed because I knew that parenting is too big a job for my husband and me to handle alone. We needed God's help in developing the wisdom and understanding so necessary for parents.

Like other families, our lives have been a mixed bag, but the Lord has helped us to cope with the bad times and enjoy the good times. The road hasn't been smooth, but faith has softened the bumps along the way.

Now our children are independent adults making their own way in the world. Brimming with the enthusiasm and vitality of youth, they anticipate productive careers in their chosen fields, as well as the satisfaction of marriages and families of their own.

And yet I still pray for them because I realize that none of us can really make our own success. We need the encouragement of other people, but we need something more, too.

That's why I ask God to watch over, guide and keep my children safe—and I will for as long as I live! ❑

Shirley Belleranti is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in Christianity Today, Sunday Digest, *and* Seek.

Women's Track of AD 2000 & Beyond Movement to meet in Chattanooga

Caroline Michael
Charlotte, N.C.

NEVER HAS the need been greater to stimulate Christians to coordinate their efforts for world evangelization. The AD 2000 & Beyond Movement grows out of a desire to respond to the Great Commission and the unique opportunity to mobilize all of God's people to reach those without Christ by the year 2000.

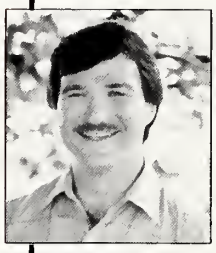
The rallying cry is, "A church for every people and the Gospel for every person by AD 2000." Those involved in this movement seek to encourage, motivate, and network women and men church leaders by inspiring them with the vision of reaching the lost.

A strong focus of AD 2000 is on an area of the world between ten degrees and forty degrees north latitude which stretches from North Africa and southern Spain to Japan and northern Philippines. This part of our world is where three main religious blocs—Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—are located.

Mobilizing prayer is essential. The Women's Track, led by Evelyn Christenson and Kathryn Grant, is composed of women representing denominations, para-church organizations, and women burdened for people lost without Jesus Christ. Fifty women gathered in Washington, D.C., and nearly eighty in Chattanooga, Tenn. last year for prayer, networking, and strategizing. The next gathering will be in Chattanooga on December 11-13, 1993.

If you're interested in learning more about the work of the International Women's Track, write to Lorry Lutz, Coordinator; 2860 S. Circle Dr. #2139; Colorado Springs, CO 80906 for a copy of the quarterly newsletter, *"Women of Vision 2000."*

During October, there is a call to prayer networks, mission agencies, and denominations to fast and pray for the least-evangelized region of the world. For further information on how to be involved, contact Christian Information Network, 11025 Hwy 83, Colorado Springs, CO 80921. ❑



For Madonna, Me... and Thee

Clayton Blackstone

SHE GENERATED quite a stir last year. After firmly establishing her reputation in the music industry and on the movie screen, she sought to broaden her career even further with a foray into the field of literature. On second thought, scratch the suggestion that her literary contribution might be anything resembling literature. Placing the printed pages of her story alongside the works of Dickens, Shakespeare, Twain, and Milton brings disgrace to the field in which these masters excelled.

According to reviewers, the book passes as little more than cheap entertainment. Graphic sexual scenes. Tasteless sensationalism. And a $50 per copy-best seller.

She surprised no one with this tell-all, show-all book detailing her sexual fantasies. Her public performances clue us to her fascination with things close to or over the edge of public sensibilities. Madonna's a raw and racy lady...and proud of it.

For some, she symbolizes everything that's wrong with the world of entertainment. Her exhibitions are an in-your-face assault on decency. Her pronouncements about sexuality a cheapening of something God created and pronounced good.

With her "if you've got it, flaunt it" approach to life, Madonna relishes her reputation as the all-American "bad girl." And most of us would readily agree: she matches the *modus operandi* quite well.

Flattery that gets the best of us

No doubt about it. Madonna's a bad lady. We might even manage to find a few others we can neatly relegate to the same category. In fact, we rather enjoy extended conversations about the rottenness in others. But discussion wanes when the bull sessions turn personal. As Becky Pippert observes, "... we flatter ourselves that we are basically good people who occasionally do bad deeds. . ."

Even secularist Albert Camus admits that the idea that comes most naturally to man, "as if from his very nature, is the idea of his own innocence. . . . We are all exceptional cases. We all want to appeal against something. Each of us insists on being innocent at all costs, even if he has to accuse the whole universe and heaven itself."

In spite of all the evidence, our capacity for self-deception remains almost fathomless. "We say to ourselves things like this: 'I'm only human.' 'Everyone does it.' and 'I did what I had to do.' 'I say this for your own good.' 'Nobody is hurt by what I do.' 'I was only following orders.' 'Nobody's perfect.'"

Christianity insists that we own up to the truth. In a world that admits to only an occasional bad person, the Scriptures counter with the claim that there are no good ones. **"There is no difference, for all have fallen short of the glory of God by sinning"** (Romans 3:23).

Only by degree

We pelt the stone fortress of this divine absolute with our objections to no avail. Heaven's edict stands undaunted by the seeming reasonableness of our arguments. "We've never acted like Madonna—not even in our wildest fantasies." Still, according to God, we differ only by degree.

Forgive the probably apocryphal illustration, but, right now, I can't think of a better way to make my point.

As the story goes, a fellow found himself seated beside one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. The setting: New York City's premier social event of the year. Throughout the evening he found himself more and more enchanted with her beauty. By the time the event drew to a close, he was burning with desire.

"Would you join me in my room for the remainder of the evening if I gave you $10,000?" he asked.

Her face flushed a bit as she responded with a hushed but eager "Yes."

"Would you join me in my room for the remainder of the evening if I gave you $10?"

Her anger flared. "What do you think I am, a cheap prostitute?" Her retort dripped with indignation.

"Madam, we have already determined your profession. We are now negotiating your price."

A face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ involves facing the mess within. Admitting with Martin Luther that we all carry in our pockets the nails which fastened Jesus to the cross. Calling evil by its right name. Exposing our propensity for rationalization.

As psychologist David Meyers writes in *The Inflated Self*, our real problems are rooted not in a low view of ourselves but an egotistical over-confidence in our own righteousness. We are more likely to accept credit than blame; we deny our responsibility for what we have done wrong; we habitually see ourselves as above average; and without exception, we are certain that others have wronged us more than we have wronged them. **"All our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away"** (Isaiah 64:6).

A close encounter of the heart

I know. We've heard the stuff for years. Carefully taught the theology in Sunday school lessons. Preached its truth with conviction. Attempted to explain it to a seeker of truth. We've pondered the scriptural texts. Poured over the writings of brilliant minds. Agreed with their musings on the fallen nature of humankind. Nodded in consent as our favorite preacher waxed eloquent about depravity general and specific.

We know the doctrine of original sin frontwards and backwards. Our minds are fully informed of the ramifications of this dirty three-letter word. But our hearts are another matter.

Isaac of Nineveh, an ancient mystic, once wrote that "he who knows his sins is much greater than he who makes someone rise from the dead. He who can really cry one hour about himself is greater than he who teaches the whole world; he who knows his own weakness is greater than he who sees angels."

We vehemently protest. Such self-examination runs counter to the feel-goodism of modern living. But until we do, we can only lay claim to a theologically informed mind. A theologically engaged heart will remain a noble idea whose time has yet to come.

The Sovereign of the universe surrendered his heavenly rights and assumed the nature of a servant for the like of Madonna, me...and thee. The Word made flesh became nothing for the sins of Madonna, me...and thee. The one with God from the beginning humbled himself and obediently died on the cross for Madonna, me...and thee. If

see page 14

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

November

1 Praise God for the commitment of **Harry and Etta Soucy** to serve Jesus Christ through Advent Christian missions.

2 Pray for **Harry and Etta** as they begin their work at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

3 Praise God for the effective service that Filipino Advent Christian pastors and conference leaders are providing as they extend God's kingdom in the **Philippines**.

4 Pray for **Margaret Helms** as she continues work in developing an evangelistic oriented radio broadcast in the Philippines.

5 Pray for **David Vignali** as he continues work with a variety of tasks in the Philippines.

6 Pray that **Beryl Joy Hollis, Barbara White,** and **Marion Damon** will sense God's presence and strength as they train leaders in India.

7 Pray that the students in the School of Evangelism at **Kodaikanal** will be sensitive to God's leading and direction as they prepare for evangelistic and church planting work.

8 Pray that God will protect **Christians in India** from harm as conflicts between Hindus and Muslims grow in that country.

9 Praise God that several young people from the Memphis, Tennessee, Advent Christian Church received Christ as their Savior and Lord at **Camp Sonshine** earlier this year.

10 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they provide leadership for the Memphis congregation and the Advent Christian urban outreach in that city.

11 Praise God for a mission-minded congregation at First Advent Christian Church in **Lenoir** and for their sponsorship of Camp Sonshine.

12 Pray that God will give strength to **Alberto Gomez** and his family as they engage in evangelistic and church planting work in the El Florido area of Tijuana, Mexico.

13 Pray that God will supply the needs of students and faculty at **Tecate Bible Institute** this fall.

14 Pray for Mexico field superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he provides oversight to Advent Christian mission work in the Baja California province of Mexico.

15 Praise God for several **work teams** from Advent Christian congregations that have gone to Mexico and Central America to help with construction and evangelistic work.

16 Pray that God will give wisdom and guidance to Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as he seeks the Lord's direction for the future of Advent Christian missions.

17 Praise God for the commitment of **Japanese Advent Christians** to the task of communicating God's love both in their country and around the world.

18 Pray that God will give courage and strength to **Japanese Advent Christian pastors** as they proclaim the gospel to people they come in contact with.

19 Pray that God will guide **Steven and Ann Lay** in their church planting work to people who will be receptive to the good news of Christ's love.

20 Pray that **Ruth Soucier** will sense God's presence and strength today as she teaches English to Japanese students.

21 Praise God for the years of effective service that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** have given to Advent Christian missions in Japan and the Philippines.

22 Praise God that our salvation comes through faith in **Jesus Christ** alone.

23 Pray that God will strengthen the **General Conference staff and regional superintendents** in their service for Jesus Christ.

24 As **Liberian** Advent Christians cope with the tragedy that has overtaken their land, pray that they will sense God's encouragement, strength, and guidance as they look toward the future.

25 Pray that God will intervene to bring **peace and reconciliation** among the three warring factions in the Liberian civil war.

26 As Christians in **Nigeria** face opposition from Muslims, pray that they will respond to violence with love, and to hatred with God's grace.

27 Pray that God will work through the efforts of Advent Christian pastors and churches in **Nigeria** as they proclaim the gospel.

28 Praise God for a fresh interest in **mission service** among Advent Christians and pray that God will continue to lead folks in Advent Christian congregations to mission service.

29 Pray that Advent Christian national missionaries in **Malaysia** will sense the Holy Spirit undergirding their service for God's kingdom.

30 Christians in the **Sudan** need prayer support as they face a hostile Islamic government. Pray that God will give them courage to boldly stand for the gospel in the face of opposition, arrest, and persecution.

Final Request continued from page 10

A final request had become a compelling, life-long responsibility.

About two years ago, our denomination turned its focus toward disciplemaking. Oh, that we Advent Christian women could envision the eyes of Jesus turning toward us and listen carefully as he shares his final request with us, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). ❑

Discipleship continued from page 13

her sins nailed his right hand to the crossed wooden timbers, mine held his left, and yours his feet.

Integrity insists that we face the truth about ourselves. Apart from Jesus Christ, all that separates thee and me from Madonna are a few yet to be negotiated details about the price of our betrayal. Still, hope permeates the despair of this blunt assessment of the facts. With the proper diagnosis comes the cure.

Carried by God's grace

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Ricky Hoyt is a physically and developmentally disabled boy who cannot care for himself in any way. Yet, by completing the Iron Man Triathalon, a one-hundred-and-twelve mile bike ride which follows a two-and-a-half mile swim and precedes a twenty-six mile run, Ricky has accomplished what few others dare to dream.

"But how?" the discerning mind wants to know. How can a child unable to care for himself in any way do what only a handful of well-honed men ever achieve?

The answer according to those who know his family: his dad. Jack Hoyt enters into the waters off Hawaii and places Ricky into a small boat, swimming for two and a half miles in open sea pulling his kid. Following the swim, he lifts the boy out of the dingy and places him in a specially built bicycle designed to carry his son's extra weight for the one-hundred-and-twelve mile ride. When completed, he lifts Ricky out of the bike, places him into a cart and pushes him at a runner's pace for twenty-six miles.

Remarkable. And we must own the fact that we're all Ricky Hoyts. Madonna, me. . . and thee.

Jesus comes to all of us in our totally disabled states. He offers to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves by carrying us to the finish line via the cross. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

...**Douglas now** understood something he hadn't previously considered. There was a sense, it seemed, in which an individual's will, whether realized or not, actually made choices with moral consequences much of the time. The daily, the trivial, the inconsequential might not be so ephemeral and unimportant after all. This wasn't just sobering to think about—it was terrifying. What if there were some kind of moral judgment at the end of it all...? Any sane person would have to make choices every day to avoid lending support to evil, however complicated and uncertain these choices might be.

—*David Aikman in* When the Almond Tree Blossoms

The core problem is not that we are too passionate about bad things, but that we are not passionate enough about good things.

—*Larry Crabb in* Finding God

Sin is not what is wrong with our minds; it is the catastrophic disorder in which we find ourselves at odds with God. This is the human condition. The facts of this disorder are all around and within us, but we could prefer to forget them. To remember them is also to remember God, and to remember God is to have to live strenuously, vigorously, and in love. We have moments when we desire to do this, but the moments don't last long. We would rather play golf. We would rather take another battery of tests at the hospital. We would rather take another course at the university. We keep looking for ways to improve our lives without dealing with God. But we can't do it.

—*Eugene Peterson in* Answering God

It's time again to get back to essentials; to dare to be simple but not simplistic; to order our lives and our churches around Christ and the Scriptures; to allow his lordship to unsettle anything in us or our society which contradicts the gospel.

—*Lloyd John Ogilvie*

Because we have been so willing to accommodate the message of the Bible to the limitations of contemporary culture, the modern world does not regard the church as a threat; I suspect that it regards us as merely boring. We are giving the modern world less and less in which to disbelieve because it senses no difference between what the church is saying and what is being said by a variety of secular voices. Thus, the modern world is not called up actively to decide for or against the church, because it sees in the church so little against which to take a stand. The world once imprisoned our ancestors now responds to an utterly enculturated church with mere indifference.

—*William Willimon in* Shaped by the Bible

The church should be a place where questions are welcomed, even encouraged.

—*Lee Strobel in* Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary

If you're communicating to your kids that what really matters is the VCR and the Mercedes-Benz, the children get a strange view of the meaning of life. They're propelled to think of themselves as simply competition machines, set to get the highest grades, get into the best schools, and make the most money. We need to communicate to our children that the most important things are what we share: family meals, going to church, worshiping God together, family vacations—those are what really count and have intrinsic meaning.

—*Robert Bellah quoted from* Christianity Today

Historically, religious freedom was thought to be in the service of religious practice. Religious freedom was not primarily freedom from religion—although the freedom to espouse no religion or even to oppose all religion was carefully protected—but freedom to exercise religion in whatever way a person deems fit.

—*Richard John Neuhaus in* The Naked Public Square

George Bush was right. We are confronting a new world order—but the new world order is the rise of Islam against the decline of a Christian civilization.

—*Stanley Hauerwas in* The Door

The human heart has so many crannies where vanity hides, so many holes where falsehood lurks, is so decked out with deceiving hypocrisy, that it often dupes itself.

—*John Calvin*

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Advent Christian

WITNESS

November 1993

God's Goal Changed LIVES

Articles on pages four, eight, and ten.

At **home** *and* **throughout** *the world, God is at work changing lives and extending his* **kingdom.**

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Carolyn Copeland offered a neighbor a ride to the hospital. Little did she realize how God would use that act of kindness in her own life.

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God works in a variety of ways. Our first three articles focus on that.

Volume 41, Number 9

Advent Christian
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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

NAFTA *Si*

WELL-MEANING Christians have a variety of viewpoints on economic and trade issues and the North American Free Trade Agreement, commonly called NAFTA, is no exception. You'll find Christians taking both sides in the NAFTA debate and the Scriptures give us the freedom to do just that. So I expect many who read these words will disagree and that's fine. But NAFTA is important to discuss and, in my view, its passage will not only strengthen the economies of Canada, Mexico, and the United States but as free trade increases, people and ideas will flow across the borders and new opportunities for Christians to communicate the gospel and plant churches throughout Latin America will emerge.

Throughout American history, there have been those who desire an isolationist, protectionist United States. They see borders as fortress walls and everything beyond them as a threat. What isolationists fail to realize is that whenever we restrict trade between nations by raising protectionist barriers through quotas and high tariffs, the long-term result is fewer jobs, higher prices, and economic decline. Look at how economies and living standards have been destroyed in nations like India and Argentina that practice protectionism. Historian Paul Johnson argues that our own Great Depression of the 1930s was caused not so much by the stock market crash of 1929 but by the protectionist Smoot-Hawley tariff act of 1931. Trade was drastically restricted and worldwide depression set the stage for the most destructive war we've ever witnessed.

Free, unrestricted trade between nations means open markets for goods, services, and ideas and that brings economic prosperity. But more importantly, it brings a sense of economic justice as more people experience a rise in living standards. Think about the serious immigration problem that four large states—California, Florida, Texas, and New York—continue to face. Why are thousands of immigrants coming from Mexico to the United States and to these four states? It's simple: to find jobs to provide for themselves and their families and to provide a better future for their children. No amount of saber rattling or punitive measures will stop people in need of work and hope. The best strategy for dealing with illegal immigration is creating the conditions for sustained economic expansion in Mexico.

NAFTA will not only help create conditions for an expanding Mexican economy, it will play an important role in economic growth in Canada and the United States. An expanding economy means new markets and more demand for goods and services. And that leads to more jobs. Will all three nations experience some job loss at the beginning? Probably. We should make sure that retraining and support are available to American families who suffer job loss. But claims of a vaccum cleaner effect sucking American jobs south of the U.S.-Mexican border are overblown and absurd. Those who make such irresponsible claims have little knowledge of history and little understanding of economics.

President Clinton is right on this issue. NAFTA will help create conditions for economic growth and expansion in all three nations. But NAFTA provides another opportunity for Christians to take advantage of. Since 1988, Mexico has undertaken efforts to reform its political system and allow religious freedom for its citizens. Two years ago, we reported on some of the harsh conditions evangelicals face in central and southern Mexico. Since that time, serious reform has taken place. Churches can now own property. Religious organizations can operate more freely. More Mexicans are hearing the Gospel. The situation is not perfect, but improvement continues. By lowering economic barriers, NAFTA will allow for more exchange of ideas and interaction between people in all three North American nations. That will keep Mexico moving away from centralized socialism toward democratic capitalism. And it will provide more opportunities for people in Mexico to hear the good news of Christ's love. ❑

What Would It Take To Save Hitler's Namesake?

Rachel Bailer
as told to Nelson Melvin

WE WERE AT the George Washington Hotel in Jacksonville, Florida, where my husband was to receive the Salesman of the Year award from the Flowers Baking Company, makers of Sunbeam baking products. The banquet was an important event for us.

My husband enjoyed the recognition that was given him. Perhaps he enjoyed it too much. It was obvious he had too much to drink. My suggestion that he cool it was not warmly received.

Out in the parking lot I insisted on driving home. He exploded in a drunken rage. Believe me, there is no way a 110-pound, petite woman, can take the keys from a six foot, 200-pound man. A night of terror began as the tires screeched leaving their mark on the parking lot asphalt. Fred raced through every stop sign and red light between the hotel and Interstate 10. I watched panic-stricken as the speedometer needle passed 70, then 80 and hovered between 90 and 100 miles-an-hour for the next 90 miles. I begged him to slow down, even pleaded with him to stop and let me out. His only response was to spew out obscenities. Oh, how I prayed for a policeman. (Have you noticed there is never one around when you need one?)

Adolph Bailer

Believe me, I prayed. I reminded God that my babies needed their mother. I'm certain that God answered that prayer and had angels see me safely home.

I would change him

The hell on earth that endured during the early years of my marriage was a far cry from the home in which I was raised. My father served as an Advent Christian minister for fifty-five years. Bible reading and prayer were as routine as breakfast, dinner, and supper in our house.

I have always wondered if the television Walton family got the idea for their closing from our house. You know, that's when the lights were turned off and each kid says good night to every other child. That's exactly what happened at the Odom farmhouse until my father's "good night" signaled for us to be quiet.

You may be asking, "Girl, didn't you know that the Bible warns against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers?" The answer is "yes." But in the wrestling match between emotion and reason, emotion almost always slams reason to the mat. Like thousands of other Christian girls who are madly in love, I persuaded myself that it didn't make that much difference. I would change him. How wrong!

After high school, I was accepted for a position in the identification division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, D.C. where I classified criminals' fingerprints. I

studied criminology while there and loved being in our nation's capital. But I longed to be closer to my family. Fortunately, I was granted a transfer to the Jacksonville office.

One day, soon after I was back in my home state, I drove out to the Oldsmobile agency to see a friend and while there saw a handsome, blond German, whom I fell for immediately. Following a brief courtship we were married.

Fred's father was an alcoholic and in a drunken rage he would frequently come home in the middle of the night, drag his son out of bed, and beat him. Fred left home at age fifteen, spent two years in Australia, then came to the United States on a permanent visa.

Soon after his arrival he was drafted into the army, which didn't make him happy. He requested that he be sent to Germany, but was refused. He understood little English and recalled later how in drill formation he often marched in the wrong direction. In the years that followed I was convinced that most of the time he was headed in the wrong direction.

Rachel Bailer

An act of Congress

Our first crisis came about five months after our marriage. Two immigration officers appeared at our door to arrest Adolph Manford Bailer. He had moved several times previous to our marriage without notifying the authorities. Also, he was considered a suspect in a serious crime that had been committed in an area where he had resided.

My father bailed Fred out of jail. At the hearing, the judge ruled that he should be deported. Understandably, I was emotionally upset. Observing this tearful, pregnant young woman must have touched his heart. He told us that there was one possibility that would allow Fred to remain in this country.

You must have heard the expression, "It would take an act of Congress" to describe a near impossible situation. That's exactly what it took to keep Fred from being deported. My father contacted Congressman Billy Matthews, who introduced a bill passed by the 87th Congress and signed by President Kennedy on June 12, 1963, which allowed my husband to stay in this country.

It took more than an act of Congress to change the problems that followed us from Jacksonville to Live Oak, Florida, where Fred worked as a Sunbeam salesman. The seeds of violence sown in my husband's childhood burst into full bloom. The slightest annoyance could trigger it. A child's spilt milk caused him to turn over the dinner table. He might throw a glass against the wall in anger, or heave a potted plant down the hall against the bedroom door.

The drinking and the other women added to my misery. You can't imagine the times I wanted out of this marriage. But the Lord said, "No." Day after day I hung on to Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." I clung to that verse even though nothing changed.

1964 was a bad year. I was in the hospital for ulcers. (Who wouldn't have ulcers in such a dysfunctional family?) Then came Hurricane Dora dumping 18 inches of rain in 36 hours. We had just built our first new home. I awakened in the morning, stepped out of bed into a couple of inches of water. We loaded the furniture into a truck and stored it at my folks' place. When I returned to get my new Chevrolet, the water was up to the seat level. My next trip was in a 75 horsepower motorboat and the water had risen to the window sills.

Apparently, I was bitten by a mosquito spawned during the flood and contracted viral encephalitis and was in a coma for six days.

Next, I discovered that I was pregnant with my third child, had major surgery and discovered that my husband had been unfaithful again.

The culmination of all these problems seemed more than I could bear. Romans 8:28 was stretched beyond belief. I was driving down Route 129 when I was tempted to drive my car at high speed into one of those pine trees and end this misery. Only thoughts about the little baby on the seat beside me and the little girls at home kept me from suicide.

A scene that defies description

At my greatest point of need Jesus came and ministered to me. Sometime during the next night I awakened from a deep sleep and saw a light in the hall. Thinking one of the girls had gone to the bathroom and left the light on, I tried to get up but couldn't move. The light came to the door of my bedroom. A robed figure framed by the doorway stood with his back to me. I knew that it was Jesus. I cried, "Jesus, everybody else has turned their back on me, don't you turn your back on me, too." The figure turned and I tried to look at his face, but the light was so brilliant that I couldn't stand it.

In a conversation without spoken words he told me that my husband was going to die, but that he would be saved before that happened. Also, I knew that one of my daughters would be deathly ill and that I would be in some ministry to help people.

It seemed like a river of crystal clear water was flowing from Jesus

that cleansed me from all hurt and bitterness.

The scene defies description. The best I can do is to say that brilliant, dust-like particles showered the room with rainbow colors, falling on the baby's crib, the dresser, everywhere. The room was filled with peace. Finally, Jesus raised his hand and said, "I'm coming back," then vanished. As I lay there I marveled that the same Jesus who walked by the Sea of Galilee, healed the sick and made the blind to see, loved me enough to come to me, too.

One might wonder if I had a dream or a vision, but I'm convinced that I experienced the presence of the resurrected Christ. My eyes were so sore and red the next day that I went to the drugstore for some relief. The druggist's comment after looking at my eyes was, "Rachel, you look as though you have been staring at the sun." No, I knew that I had been looking at the Son.

Although I experienced a new inner peace, externally, the situation remained unchanged. One Sunday morning when the girls and I were leaving for church, Fred took the car keys, refusing to let us use it. When I went to the phone to call for a ride, he yanked it out of the wall. We walked about a mile to church. Years later we would see how God rewarded our faithfulness.

This is how the Lord fulfilled the word he shared with me the night he appeared to me: In 1970 my ten-year-old daughter was hospitalized after a local physician administered a smallpox shot. Apparently, she touched the vaccination and then touched her lips giving herself a severe case similar to smallpox. Her illness became critical so I took her to a specialist in Gainesville.

Medication proved ineffective and her condition worsened to the point that Dr. Winetroup advised me to take her home and make her as comfortable as possible. It was his way of telling me that she was going to die. Heavyhearted, I drove the 35 miles home in the rain with a very sick little girl in the back seat.

Listening to the monotonous swish of the windshield wipers and depressed by the overcast sky, Satan flashed tormenting images on the screen of my mind—a small casket, the funeral, the cemetery. The thought of losing my beloved Ria was unbearable.

That night, I dreamed that a woman came into the house with a hymnbook under her arm, went back to the bedroom, sang a song, prayed, and Ria was healed instantly. I recognized the lady in my dream to be Mrs. Sarah King.

I awakened early and waited impatiently until six o'clock, apologized for the early phone call and asked her if she would come and pray for Ria. While I told her about the dream, I did not share any of the details. When Mrs. King came through the door with a hymnbook under her arm I knew that God was going to move. She went to the back bedroom, sang a song, prayed, just as I had seen in the dream, and Ria was

Jesus Will Deliver You

Edward Fudge
Katy, Texas

WE CHRISTIANS need to know that Jesus brings life, not condemnation (John 3:17). We already know we are sinners. Many of us live in condemnation much of the time. Deep inside we know our private addictions and secret compulsions, whether to pride, self-centeredness, sexual lust, alcohol (or other drugs), rage, power, possessions, or whatever.

We know by experience that we cannot break these bonds in our own strength. By ourselves, we can only grit our teeth, make new resolutions, maintain public appearances and respect, calculate that we are not as bad as we might be, rationalize that God knows our "weakness" and pray that he will mercifully forgive. And, thank God, he does!

But God wants to do even more. He also wants to deliver us from our bondage! He wants to replace slavery with liberty, guilt with peace, condemnation with assurance of his overwhelming love. Jesus still has power over all demons—personal and impersonal—and he waits patiently to liberate us all. He will guide us, empower us, supply every true need, and fill us so full of himself that we continually spill over with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness and faithfulness. But Jesus will not force his way into our hearts.

How do we enjoy God's liberation? Ironically, by giving up all our own claim of self-rule. By acknowledging that he is God and we are not. By admitting—to ourselves, to God, and to some other safe person—the absolute unvarnished truth about whatever power has us in its grip. By truly making God our "Lord" as well as "Savior." By surrendering every segment of every part of our lives (thoughts, words, and deeds) to his sovereignty without reservation. By asking him to fill us with his Spirit and make us like Jesus. By surrendering our will to God repeatedly throughout every new day he gives us on this earth.

As we do this, we immediately experience God's loving, healing, liberating touch. And we can be sure he will be faithful to continue and perfect the process as we look in submissive trust to him. ❑

healed instantly. She got out of bed, her temperature dropped from 105° to normal in a matter of minutes, and she ate solid food for the first time in days.

For some reason I felt that we needed to return to Dr. Winetroup to verify what God had done. He wrote on his report, "Divine Healing."

My husband comes to Christ

In 1975 my husband was in a terrible automobile accident as the result of driving while drunk. The law enforcement officer estimated that he was going about 85 or 90 miles an hour.

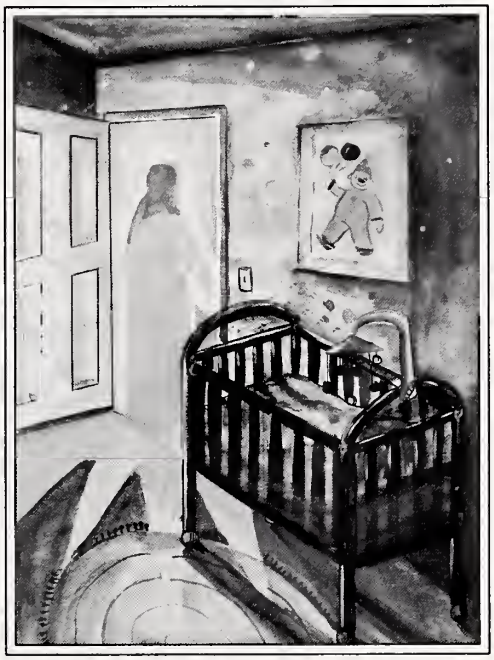
I received a phone call saying that if I wanted to see him alive I needed to hurry to Waterman Memorial Hospital in Eustis, Florida.

When I entered the intensive care unit, I was certain that the nurse had directed me to the wrong bed. That man couldn't possibly be Fred. But the nurse assured me that it was. His head was as big as a basketball and every bone in his face was broken. The doctor referred to his condition as a floating face. When I went out to the lounge, there was another woman who claimed to be his wife. She had already been in to see him and I was ready to let her have him, but she was never to be seen again. Once more I asked, "Do I have to go through this again?" The answer was "yes." The Lord reminded me that he had told me that Fred would be saved before he died.

Several weeks later, I drove home with him propped up in the back seat. His face was wired so that he was unable to speak. As I drove along, the silence was broken by the hummed tune, "Amazing Grace" coming from the back of the car. Fred couldn't speak but I knew in that moment that Jesus had saved him.

The next six years were to be the happiest of our marriage. My husband completely changed—his language, his treatment of me and the girls, everything. "Old things had passed away." He was a new creature in Christ.

Then one weekend Fred came home sick from a construction project where he was superintendent. He had been losing weight, but had resisted my efforts to get him to a doctor for



weeks. He suffered through the night and the next morning had me drive him to the emergency room. As soon as the doctor read the X-rays he explained that cancer had spread to four of Fred's vital organs. His prognosis was that he had between two weeks and two months to live.

While in the hospital those last few weeks he wanted me to read the Bible to him again and again. He told me that before he was saved I was the only Bible that he had read and he thanked me for being faithful to Christ.

The passage that he wanted to hear most was the twenty-first chapter of Revelation. He would ask, "Read again about those streets of gold and those gates of pearl." I was by his bedside when he died at four p.m. on Mother's Day 1981. The Lord said to me, "He's in my hands. You are free to go."

You will recall that when Jesus appeared to me the fourth fact that he shared with me was that I would be involved in a ministry helping people. In 1972 I entered college to study psychology and for the past 20 years have been a substance abuse counselor where I have ministered to hurting people bound by addictions, to others suffering emotional problems and to victims of incest, rape and spousal abuse.

Some time ago a woman confided that a rapist had nailed her hands to the headboard of the bed and raped her. Tears flowed down her face and mine as she held out her nail-scarred hands. I was able to tell her of another who had nailed-pierced hands who was waiting to heal her hurts.

As a wife, who lived with an emotionally abusive husband, and as a counselor who has counseled many men who have abused their wife and children, I take this opportunity to speak to any man who is an abuser. If Jesus could make a new creature out of Hitler's namesake, he can free you. Turn your life over to him right now. If you have tried to stop without success, get professional help from a Christian therapist. Don't continue to hurt those you love.

To you who are groping through the shadows, especially you who seem trapped in a seemingly hopeless marriage, be encouraged. Jesus came to me in my darkest hour. Once Romans 8:28 seemed strained beyond belief. Now I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that "all things do work together for good to them that love the Lord and who are called according to his purpose." Jesus cares for you. ❑

Rachel Bailer is active at the Advent Christian Church in Beechville, Fla. She works as a mental health and substance abuse counselor at the Suwannee River Counseling Center. Nelson Melvin is a former Advent Christian Witness *editor who lives in Charlotte, N.C. He currently serves as editor of* Testimony, *a quarterly publication of the International Fellowship of Christian Businessmen.*

Philippine Journey

Jane Palmer Jandayan
Cagayan de Oro, Philippines

EARLIER this year, I made a trip to the Philippines in order to visit my friend of many years, Pastor Melchor Jandayan, as well as to see and visit the many Advent Christian congregations in the Philippine Conference. This was the first time I had ever visited an Asian country, and it was with some hesitation that I boarded the plane for a trip that would forever be etched in my mind.

Before I left, a friend reminded me of something important. "Jane, you are not going to a country that is filled with strangers," she said. "You are going to visit God's people." I was reminded of the truth of that statement over and over again throughout my trip.

Initially all my senses were heightened to the different climate, sounds, and smells of this beautiful Asian country. To see a rooster walking down the center divider of downtown Manila was my first indication that this was going to be a trip filled with many new experiences. Thus the journey began.

Time and space does not permit a complete detailed account of all the people that I met, nor of the experiences enjoyed. Therefore, let me highlight just a few that stand out in my mind.

Cagayan and Clavaria

Cagayan de Oro City, where Oro Bible College, the Advent Christian Bible school, is located, was first on the agenda. This is a well-organized college where students are trained for church leadership. You can be sure that by the time students graduate, they have spent a good deal of time in hands-on ministry in many areas of Christian service.

Then there is Pastor Hermenegildo Mahinay in the mountainous town of Claveria. It was here that I first learned the truth of my friend's words. People came from all around to see and hear this American woman share a greeting from the United States. Immediately, I was struck with the atmosphere of heart-felt worship through music. Even the children enthusiastically joined in the singing of Scripture choruses (in English!). What a joy to see even the tiniest child clapping his hands and singing songs of praise to Jesus.

Following the service, many came to extend to me a heart-felt greeting that only family can give. I soon realized the gracious hospitality and friendliness of the Filipino people, and any fears that I might have had remaining concerning my travels left me.

Another special memory is that of Pastor Virgilio Pallo and his lovely wife, Inday, who live in the small provincial town of Tamboboan, Claveria. This was the location of the first Advent Christian missionaries, and Pastor Pallo and his family reside

in the house where our missionaries, Howard and Anna May Towne once lived. I had the joy of an overnight visit in that house. Pastor Pallo is a "tentmaker pastor." The term is borrowed from the account in Acts 18 where the apostle Paul supported his own ministry through the making of tents. Like Paul, Pastor Pallo supports his ministry through hard labor. On Sundays he is the pastor of the Advent Christian Church, and during the week he works as a farmer. In his "spare" time he visits homes and outlying communities sharing Bible studies and bringing the Word of the Gospel. After leaving their home the following day, I was not only inspired by the deep level of commitment to God's service, but I also knew that these precious people were friends.

Cebu and Iligan City

A special treat was meeting Eleazar Comahig, pastor of the Maranatha Bible Church in Iligan City. This church is still under construction and has been for many years. Each year an addition is made to the structure as money is available. This year's project was to complete the roof. Pastor Comahig shared that the next project would be a floor. After that, they hope to complete the walls. However, these small discomforts do not stop the spreading of the Gospel. While I was there, on a Sunday afternoon, the church hosted an evangelism workshop. Many people came to learn more of the fundamentals of sharing Jesus with those who are lost.

> Before I left, a friend reminded me of something important. "Jane, you are not going to a country that is filled with strangers," she said. "You are going to visit God's people." I was reminded of the truth of that statement over and over again.

I had heard of this church for many years and felt honored to finally be sitting there taking in all that was shared.

On to Cebu City, where Missionary Margaret Helms currently resides. I sat in on a meeting with several pastors and missionaries, and then joined Pastor Repuio Sambas and his wife, Flor, for a delicious lunch. Their church is in a state of construction as well. The parsonage was on the second floor of the structure. What touched my heart with this special couple was their assurance that God is faithful. Flor shared with me the details of construction and how they had enjoyed electricity for only the last five months. Until recently, they had to hand carry buckets of water, as there was no inside plumbing. All this with a baby in the home! But, she added, "God has met our every need. He is a mighty God!" Can anyone doubt the faith of these special people as they continue to sacrificially serve?

On two of the three Sundays that I was in the Philippines I worshiped at New Life Fellowship in Iligan City. The spirit of worship and praise was evident from the time I stepped into the building. The song leader, Mrs. Ragasajo, had joy written all over her face as she led the congregation in song. And then her husband, the chairman of the board, shared with the people. Again there was music, always with the children singing out with great enthusiasm. Words cannot begin to express the dynamics of the spirit of worship in that place.

Finally I met Dr. Linda Faith Quemada, head of the Philippine Gospel Association, an organization devoted to medical missions. Their objective is to take medical teams to areas with no hospitals or clinics and provide needed medical attention. Then, as a part of the ministry, others on the team share in music, children's programming, and evangelistic preaching. This ministry is faithful to what Jesus taught, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:35-36).

This is a ministry outside the Advent Christian Missions Association, but one of our pastors, Melchor Jandayan, is actively involved with this work. Through the medical missions program many have been helped, and the Gospel has been shared.

As I left the Philippines I was reminded of the universality of our mighty God. There are no borders or countries in the family of God. As the Scripture chorus states, "We are one in the bond of love. . . . Let us praise Jesus Christ, God's Son." Truly these are special people with special stories to share. I have been blessed in letting them touch my life. ❑

Jane Palmer Jandayan attended Berkshire Christian College and has been active in Advent Christian congregations throughout her life. She and Pastor Melchor Jandayan were married in April. She wrote this article after returning from a January trip to the Philippines when she had the opportunity to visit several Advent Christian congregations and ministers in that country.

A Small, Inconsequential Act of Kindness

Carolyn Brown Copeland
Phoenix, Ariz.

IT WAS MONDAY night and the sky was black with storm clouds. I was hurrying to meet my team at the bowling alley when I spotted him, standing alone at the bus stop. The bushy, white mustache and balding head gave him the look of an elderly, oversized white walrus as he paced in front of the bench. What was he doing there, *alone*?

He was my neighbor. Although I knew this elderly gentleman only by sight, tonight I felt compelled to stop and speak to him. Our city bus service was not too dependable after the evening rush hour, and it was getting dark with the threat of storm. I wheeled the car into the shopping center parking lot and coasted over to the bus bench.

"Hi, neighbor," I greeted him, for I didn't know his name. He and his wife were private people who, it seemed, did not wish to intrude into the lives of their neighbors and expected the same consideration in return. "Can I give you a lift someplace?" I offered. "You may be all night waiting for a bus here."

He accepted my offer gratefully, swinging his huge frame into my small car. He introduced himself—Oscar Henderson*— and explained that his wife, Martha, was admitted to Baptist Hospital that day. I introduced myself clarifying, "I'm the one who walks the little black dog with the red sweater in the wintertime." He smiled recognition. It always amused me that many of our neighbors knew me, not by face, but by the small black cocker spaniel I walked daily.

Mr. Henderson added that Martha had driven herself to the hospital and he had driven the car home. But he didn't see well enough to drive at night. "Martha will be worried," he fretted, "I expected to be there a half hour ago. I must have missed the last bus." He explained that Martha had forgotten a few things she would need overnight and he volunteered to bring them up on the bus.

"It will only take a few minutes to drop you at the hospital," I said, "It's practically on my way to the bowling alley." When I mentioned bowling, he worried about making me late. "They'll either wait for me or start without me," I assured him. "I can catch up when I get there. We're allowed three make-up frames. I shouldn't be *that* late."

At the hospital, I dropped him at the door, feeling slightly guilty for having to leave. "Can I pick you up at nine when I'm through bowling?" I offered.

He declined. "My daughter is supposed to meet me here. She'll take me home." I didn't realize they had children.

Where else can I turn?

It was a small, inconsequential act of kindness I performed that night.

* *not his real name*

Next day I sent Mrs. Henderson a get-well card and dismissed the old couple from my mind. In time, I saw her working in the front yard as I passed with my dog. The surgery, I assumed, was successful. We waved to each other, as neighbors do. Our relationship was much the same as before.

About a year or two later, Mr. Henderson appeared at our door after dark. "I don't know who else to turn to," he confessed, explaining that Martha was back in the hospital. She was to undergo surgery in the morning for lung cancer. "She drove herself to the hospital and I took the bus home. The car is still in the hospital parking lot. I need someone to drive it home. My eyes are so bad I can't see to drive anymore. Not even in the daytime."

My husband, Bud, took the car keys as Mr. Henderson told him where to find the car. By now their little yellow Volkswagen "bug" was familiar to us. We had no trouble finding it. When it was safely parked in the Henderson's driveway and the keys returned, Mr. Henderson outdid himself showering us with gratitude and thanksgiving.

"Can we give you a lift to the hospital in the morning?" Bud asked, but Mr. Henderson preferred to remain independent.

"I can manage the bus system during the day," he said, adding as an afterthought, "but if it wouldn't be too much trouble, I'd appreciate a ride on Sunday." We knew the buses didn't run on Sunday and assured him it would be no trouble at all. A time was arranged to meet. One Sunday afternoon we even spent some time visiting Martha at the hospital.

When Mrs. Henderson's condition improved enough to allow her to return home, we offered to drive Mr. Henderson to the hospital and take them both home, but he would not hear of it.

"We will take a cab," he insisted, "There may be a long wait to check out. You have been too kind already." No amount of persuasion would make him change his mind.

Sharing Thanksgiving

Mrs. Henderson came home a few days before Thanksgiving. What an abysmal Thanksgiving this will be for them, I thought, knowing she would be unable to cook, and probably not even be strong enough to go out for dinner. Finally, I asked, "Would you mind if I brought Thanksgiving plates over for you and Mrs. Henderson? We'll have more than enough." He accepted the offer graciously.

On Thanksgiving Day, we prepared two generous platefuls of turkey with all the trimmings. Later, they told us they ate for *two* days on the food provided.

It was a small, inconsequential Thanksgiving act of kindness. Eventually, Mrs. Henderson regained her strength and now we sometimes stopped to chat when we saw them outside in the yard. She seldom neglected to mention our Thanksgiving kindness. They bubbled over with grateful hearts. It was such a joy to help them.

Several years after Mrs. Henderson's surgery—half of one lung had been removed—and she was beginning to feel victorious over cancer, *I* faced the prospect of surgery. Cancer was suspected. Fear gripped my being. Fear of chronic illness. Fear of cancer. Fear of death.

I don't know how the Hendersons found out. But Martha became one of my stalwart supporters. For a long time after my surgery, she ministered to me with jars of homemade soup and words of encouragement. She was not afraid to talk about cancer and its consequences, as were many of my closer friends who knew little about the disease. And having been a cancer victim herself, Martha was knowledgeable.

Was it a *small, inconsequential act of kindness* she performed? I didn't think so. To me, it was a lifeline.

Three years have passed and it is thanksgiving time of the year again. I just called the Hendersons to see if they would share Thanksgiving dinner with us. A verse from Luke 6:38 came to mind, ". . . give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. . . For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

And I wonder: in God's eyes, are there *any* small, inconsequential acts of kindness? ❑

Who deserves a journalism scholarship?

We'd like to know. The Evangelical Press Association awards several scholarships each year to students pursuing a career in religious journalism. Applications are now available and must be completed by March 1. Awards will be announced in May.

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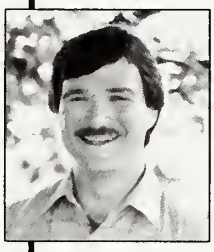
Discipleship



Clayton Blackstone

Caught with a Hand in the Cookie Jar

I THOUGHT the situation demanded I play the role of big shot. Call it a rite of passage. The final proof of the onset of manhood. I suppose it's not such a big deal anymore. Some teens these days own cars before securing a license to drive them. But when I was a boy-man. . . .

It took hours of begging before Dad relented. Before we wrapped up negotiations, he extracted a promise—one destined to haunt me for the remainder of my days on the planet. "Drive it straight to school and straight home after ball practice. When at school, leave it parked," he insisted.

We had a deal.

But what parents don't know can't hurt them, or so I reasoned then. I couldn't let my friends learn of the unreasonable restriction under which I was being forced to operate. So I drove my good buddy home during lunch hour. Just a hundred yards or less from the entrance to the school parking lot. Not far, but far enough to stake my claim on manhood.

Snow banks usually get high in northern Maine in the wintertime. The season of '68 was no exception. I backed out of his driveway carefully. When I saw the other car barreling through the school zone at a speed well above the posted 15 mph, I slid the shift lever into Drive hoping to avoid impact. A millisecond later, the thud of Murphy's Law echoed in my ears. The grating of metal against metal quickly iced the exhilaration of a teen who, only seconds earlier, thought he had graduated into manhood.

But worse than the noise of impact: the wail of a guilty conscience. A conscience now painfully aware of how a single macho act violated my father's trust in me.

Several days later, I stood with knees shaking in front of a man robed in black and sitting behind a high, dark oak desk. A blue-uniformed friend of his had invited me to attend this particular gathering because, according to the laws of the State of Maine, one violates the legal code by backing out of a driveway. The summons read: "You are cordially invited to join us at District Court for failure to yield right-of-way."

The man in black encouraged me to enter a plea.

I managed a meek "Guilty, sir."

"Guilty!" I hated the sound of the word. I detested the feelings it induced. Still do, in fact.

Crushed by the infinite weight of omnipotence

I suppose that some folks possess a more sensitive conscience than others, but all of us face the problem of guilt and what to do about it somewhere along the line. Actually, the problem gets a bit worse after one decides to become a follower of the living Christ. He sends his Spirit to take up residence inside us. Among other things, he functions as a conscience-pricker. He's one who knows better than anyone else how to hold our feet to the fire.

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkagaard once observed that when one has the least thing on one's conscience, "one is immediately conscious of the infinite weight of God."

We gasp for breath under the tonnage which threatens to crush our spirits. Like Belorba Which-cote in George MacDonald's short story, *The Flight of the Shadow*, our insides burn with our secret. She had searched a cabinet looking for the shining stones she had often seen her uncle take out and turn over in his hand. Like us, she had done what she had not been given permission to do. But unlike many of us, she could not rest until she confessed.

> **All** of us face the problem of guilt and what to do about it somewhere along the line.

Sometime during the Battle of the Conscience, we pause to wonder if God enjoys watching us squirm. Perhaps Jesus bears a resemblance to the tattling sibling who savors watching us get our just deserts. And could it be that the Holy Spirit revels in his role as a nagging conscience?

Our feelings attempt to convince us of the reality of these distorted caricatures. But feelings lie. The apostle John unveils the truth of the matter: *The Father did not send the Son into the world that he loved to condemn it, but to save it through the Word made flesh.*

Catch John's drift? God's not into condemnation. Although a judge for certain, he's not looking for an opportunity to bang the gavel and pronounce the sentence. Instead, he initiated the process of saving the people he loves by sending his son.

God loves vigorously. No wringing of the hands, agonizing over the terrible condition of humanity. He loved. He gave. He sent to save rather than condemn.

No ifs, ands, or buts

But there's a catch. *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only son.*

"Fifty dollars and thirty days of license suspension."

"But your Honor, according to the measurements of the other fellow's tire marks, he was going 85 in a 15. I had the car in Drive. If he hadn't been going so fast, we would have avoided a collision."

My appeal fell on deaf ears. "Son, you just pleaded guilty. You admitted you backed out of the driveway in violation of the law. Next case!"

The judge based his decision upon the standard. The fact that the other fellow was speeding had nothing to do with my guilt or innocence. I broke the law. I had to pay.

Believe on the Word made flesh and live. Look away and die.

But. . .

No buts. Believe on the Word made flesh and live. Look away and die. John could not have painted the contrast with bolder strokes. Believe. Believe. Three times in one verse. Five times in three. It's important stuff. The kind an eternity is made of. The one who believes lives. The one who refuses to believe is condemned by his own choices.

To believe in the name is to place full confidence in all that a person stands for. It's more than intellectual assent. It involves trust. It develops through persuasion and conviction. It results in confidence.

The acne of the soul

This is the basis upon which people are judged: Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Everyone who does wrong hates the light and keeps away from the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Notice the careful contrast. The difference between the believer and the nonbeliever lies not in the matter of guilt, but in the attitude towards light. There's enough blame to go around. We all deserve to hear the judge's gavel announce the sentence. But unbelievers hate the light because it exposes.

I've always maintained that if one can survive the teenage years, one can survive anything. Perhaps one of the cruelest consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve which directly affects the growing up years—the appearance of little red bumps on the face. Doctors call it acne. We called them zits. Neither name comes close to identifying the emotional pain they cause. Girls are lucky. They can partially cover them with makeup. But since real men don't wear makeup, we are left with no choice but to endure the full effects of Big Red.

> The difference between believer and unbeliever lies not in the matter of guilt, but in the attitude towards **light**.

And, at least it seemed to me, they always got worse just before I had to have a picture taken. I hated cameras then. They exposed the truth I didn't want to face. I only agreed to sit for my senior pictures after the photographer promised to airbrush those little buggers away in the finished product. In those days, give me distance and darkness. Both hid the ugly red reminders of my humanity.

Call guilt the acne of the soul. We rush to cover it up. Run from it. Deny it. We cloak it with fancy new titles. Herald the games we play as worthy of commendation. Redefine right and wrong to accommodate our antics.

Sometimes we even banish God from our vocabulary, thinking that by doing so we rid ourselves of the one who makes us feel guilty.

Once in a while during my growing up years, I got the urge to help Mom do some of the things around the house she seldom had time for. With five boys, keeping up was hard to do. I always tackled the project with a vengeance. As I remember it, I put a few things away where they belonged (probably very few!). I threw some things in the trash, hoping no one would miss them but not really caring if they did. And the mending pile—well, it got stuffed wherever I could find a place out of sight.

I hid it. But hiding never solved the problem. In fact, it made it worse. Mom still had to mend the clothes, but now she had to find them too!

I'm not suggesting that guilt deserves the onus of a reputation as "The Big Bad Bogy Man" who bears full responsibility for all our passions, phobias, and problems. Still, I believe the Scriptures identify it as an always present, behind the scenes force. We try to run from the truth it exposes. Something called sin separates us from enjoying a relationship with God, a friendship we secretly want whether we realize it or not. One theologian identified this hunger for intimacy as proof that a "God-shaped vacuum" exists in every heart.

In order to restore rapport, sin must be unearthed. That's when we begin to get skittish. Under the brilliant light of the life of the Creator of the Universe made flesh, the ugly red reminders of our humanity stand out like Rudolph's nose.

see page 18

My Pilgrimage

Linda Leavitt

Calling

WITH trembling hands and heart I dial that familiar number. As the phone rings, my stomach ties up in knots. It always does when I call my mother.

The conversation begins with the usual formalities, "How are you? How's the family?" But as usual, mom dominates the conversation with her own woes and worries, and once again I feel like she cares little for me or my family, and does not want to hear about what's going on in our lives. Before the call, I promised myself that I would not become easily hurt or defensive this time. But this call must end quickly or I won't be able to fulfill my promise. As the conversation ends and I hang up, I wonder if things will ever change. Will our relationship ever be what I long for it to be?

Please understand that I love my mother very much, and in her own way I believe she loves me. But love, really being able to give and receive love, is something my mom knows little about.

As Christians we presume that love is something everyone knows, that everyone has experienced. Not so for my mother. Her own mother was an alcoholic. Because of this and her adulterous relationships, my grandfather committed suicide when my mother was five years old. Mom was present when his body was discovered. Those scars run deep. And the scars of being removed from the

Women's Ministries

Why Pray

Irma Wallace
Vernon, Vt.

AS FOLLOWERS of Jesus Christ what does prayer mean to us? Many individuals profess belief in God and in the need for prayer, but actually spend little time praying.

When we pray, do we expect God to answer? Or is prayer a duty we perform, a chore, something we know must be done but from which we get little or no joy?

Why should we pray?

Why should God want us to pray? Certainly a sovereign God is able to do anything he wills without our feeble prayers. Why, then, does he tell us not only to pray but to "pray without ceasing?"

When I was growing up, many children were taught early in life to kneel before going to bed and to recite, "now I lay me down to sleep. . ." Over the years the habit of kneeling to say a nighttime prayer may continue, but often only by rote. Perhaps we feel like the man who said to a friend who had problems, "I'd like to help you but *all I can do is pray*, as though prayer were a last resort and wouldn't accomplish very much. We might make many requests, sometimes getting what we ask for; sometimes, not.

Do we think of prayer as simply communicating with God, in essence talking with him? Jesus told his disciples to ". . . ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). But does he tell us for *what* we should ask?

In this same conversation, Jesus said, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13). God wants us to ask him for his Holy Spirit. Only as the Spirit abides in us and works through us can we be kept in the center of God's will. Scripture teaches that we should "seek. . . first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" and he will supply all our needs. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit without measure and lived only to do his Father's will.

When we are in God's will, we discover joy in fellowshipping with him and with his Son. Paul wrote, "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9). And John, the apostle of love, wrote in his first letter to the churches, ". . . and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

We enjoy fellowship with family and friends. What do we mean by

Mom

home and being taken in by various family members, not out of love but out of duty, left permanent impressions that remain to this day. By age fourteen, my mother was on her own, going to school, and working to provide for herself.

Three years later mom married my father, who also was an alcoholic, whose lifestyle mirrored the image of the mother my mom was taken from at age five. A book could be written of all the horrors mom and the members of our family have gone through. The resulting bitterness and coldness in her life is understandable. My mind tells me all this and I have forgiven her for all the hurt and pain she allowed in my own life. But the heart of this daughter still cries out, "Mom," and her response just isn't there.

I can never remember mom holding me, or rocking me, or just saying, "I love you." The void in my own life had almost swallowed me up before I met Jesus Christ. He has filled the void and provided me with many other "mothers." He has taught me how to love and pass that love on to my own children. He is breaking the cycle of unlove and abuse, not only in my life, but in the lives of my other family members. Yet my heart still hopes and prays—for mom.

I know how desperately mom needs the Savior, how desperately she needs to know Jesus' love. I also know that I will never receive from her what I long for unless that day comes. Until then, my hand still trembles, my stomach still knots up, as I dial that familiar number—and pray! ❑

"fellowship" and how can we have it with God? The dictionary includes among its definitions "an association of those having similar interests; companionship." Are our interests focused on the priorities of this world or are they in tune to those of our heavenly Father?'

When we were adopted into God's family, he gave each of us a new heart and a new mind. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, we are admonished to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). *Let* this mind—God puts that mind in you and me, but we must make room for it, let it have its rightful place. Jesus came to earth for one reason—to do his Father's will. If doing God's will is our deep desire, then we will desire to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son.

> You and I can have the excitement and privilege of knowing someone far greater than anyone in Washington, D.C., or anywhere else. We can actually know the Creator of the the universe, the God of all grace.

A great privilege

A few years ago, a friend of ours received an appointment in Washington, D.C., where he spent much of his time with important government leaders. Many who were aware of the fact that we knew him and his wife would ask: "Aren't you excited that you know them? Do you still hear from them? Will you continue to keep in touch?" Some even envied the relationship.

You and I can have the excitement and privilege of knowing someone far greater than anyone in Washington, D.C., or anywhere else. We can actually know the Creator of the universe, the God of all grace. In prayer, he is instantly available to each of us. While he is a holy God and we are imperfect creatures, his great love for us prompted God to provide a way, through Jesus, to enable us to talk with him any time we wish. What a privilege! Our Creator *wants* us to talk with him, to love him, to be his friend. Can any privilege on earth compare with this that is ours through prayer?

Most of us look forward to enjoying eternal life. Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

We can start to know God now, through prayer. These are the most important reasons to pray—that we might have fellowship with God through his Son, that we get to know God and see life the way that Jesus did, and that we seek God's will more than anything else in life. Peter tells us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Consider the words of the apostle Paul. "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Only through prayer can this heavenly blessing be ours. Be satisfied with nothing less. God is waiting for you to ask so that he can give you his very best. ❑

JUDGE RULES AGAINST PARENTS IN FRENCH CUSTODY

Elisabeth Farrell
Washington, D.C.

***Editor's Note:** This report is a follow-up to "French Authorities Seize Children of Protestant Families," which appeared in the July/August* Advent Christian Witness.

A FRENCH judge has ruled that seven children placed in state custody in February will be held for further investigation for up to two years. The children's parents are members of a Protestant church, Eglise Chrtienne La Citadelle (Citadel Christian Church).

Children's Judge Marie-Odile Degrelle-Croissant ruled on July 30 that three of the parents may not have any contact with their children, while the others are allowed visits only in the presence of a third party and at a neutral location.

The children were taken from their homes on February 10 and the parents were charged with sequestering and hitting minors, and lack of care. The parents maintain the allegations are without substantiation and the government action is a clear case of religious persecution against their Christian faith. Opponents charge that the church is a dangerous cult.

According to the judicial rulings, Stphane, 10, Jonathan, 12, and Cline, 17, Antoine will continue to be held for an undetermined length of time in a state facility. Their father, Daniel, may visit them in the presence of a third party, although frequency and length of visits have yet to be established. Their mother, Esther, may not visit them.

Michel and Sylvie Bahjejian were granted supervised visits with their son, Nathanael, 2, who will continue to be held for an undetermined length of time. Details of the visits have not been decided.

Georges and Dlia Mihaães may not visit their 13-year-old twin sons, Flavius and Octavius, who will be held for two years, the maximum allowable period. The twins will be placed in the same facility for a time, followed by placement in separate facilities.

Axel and Delwyn Schmidt's daughter, Victoria, 3, will continue to be held in a state facility for an undefined period. Parents were granted supervised visits.

Irregular judicial hearings

According to Georges Mihaães, there were a number of irregularities in the proceedings. He said he and his wife and the Schmidts met with the judge prior to the decision, but the Antoines and Bahjejians have not had judicial hearings since early April. The court scheduled a meeting, but did not notify the parents in time and their lawyers were unable to attend.

Mihaães also said that during a hearing with Investigating Judge Florence Vigier, Axel Schmidt was reportedly questioned extensively about his Christian faith and church life, but not about allegations of child abuse of which he was accused.

Parents have also said that judicial authorities insinuated to them and their lawyers that if they testified against the other parents in the case they might regain custody of their children. One parent, Delwyn Schmidt, was reportedly told by Degrelle-Croissant and the public prosecutor that if she separated from her husband she might regain custody of her daughter.

The organization Droits de l'Homme Sans Frontieres (DHF, or Human Rights Without Borders) contacted Degrelle-Croissant for comment, but she was not available. DHF also contacted Vigier by telephone about the case, but she would not comment, citing confidentiality laws. "I absolutely can say nothing except that the matter is in court," Vigier said. "And for the moment, the matter is not finished."

Psychiatric evaluations lack evidence

News Network International (NNI) obtained copies of the judgments concerning six of the children, and copies of the conclusions of the government-ordered psychiatric reports on two of the parents. Neither the judgments nor the reports made reference to any documentation to support allegations of child abuse, such as reports from doctors, hospital, or police. The judgments relied heavily upon psychiatric exams administered to the families by Dr. Georges Bitoun, a court-appointed

Visiting Rights Restricted

psychiatrist.

The psychiatric report on Esther Antoine noted that as a result of her "absolute conviction of her religious principles and her adherence to a 'living faith,'...[she] could be influenced by seducing personalities...This danger is in relation to her conviction of beliefs that could lead her to harmful behavior. However, surveillance and control of her relations with children would considerably lessen the nature of this danger."

The psychiatric report on Axel Schmidt concluded, "The accusations are in relation to his religious convictions and the rigor and the inflexibility in the application of his educational principles. . . [There is] danger above all concerning the influence [he] could have on children because of his strong convictions. . . For this reason, discrete surveillance. . . is necessary if any children are entrusted to [him]."

Parents said the children's psychiatric exams were administered four months after they had been traumatized by separation from their parents and a Christian home environment, and did not reflect the normal condition of the children.

One child, for example, who was described by her doctor as "superb" before she was removed from her parents, was later described in a report as very pale, with a distraught gaze, staying in corners, showing no affection, and acting like a "rag doll." Another child has gained 35 pounds since being taken into custody.

CASE

The only reference to physical abuse in the judgment regarding Octavius and Flavius Mihaães was that the boys said they had been "hit" by their mother and Esther Antoine. The judgment did not elaborate if the hitting was mild discipline or stronger abuse. Spanking is not illegal in France.

The judgment concerning the Antoine children referred to a psychological report that noted "an excess of punishment inflicted by their parents and notably their mother." No details were given, nor was documentation such as medical reports referred to.

In the judgment concerning Victoria Schmidt, there was no indication that she claimed she had been abused, although the judgment referred to statements made by other children that her father sometimes hit her after hugging her. NNI did not see court documents on Nathanael Bahjejian.

Parents argued that the information in the judgments is contradictory. In the case of the Antoine children, for example, they pointed out that the judgment noted "the children's fear of being 'returned' to their parents." Two paragraphs later, however, the judgment states that the children "expressed their desire to live with their parents, if Mrs. Mihaães, Mr. Schmidt, and Mrs. Bahjejian [another church member] quit the 'Citadelle cult.'"

see page 18

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

December

1 Pray that God will guide those preparing to participate in the upcoming Advent Christian **Asian Strategy Conference** this spring in the Philippines.

2 Praise God that **Harry and Etta Soucy** have safely arrived in the Philippines and pray that God will strengthen them as they adjust to their new responsibilities.

3 Pray that **David Vignali** and **Margaret Helms** will sense God's guidance as they carry out their many responsibilities in the Philippines.

4 Praise God for the continued impact of **Filipino** Advent Christian congregations and pastors in communicating the good news of Christ's love.

5 On this second Sunday of Advent, praise God for expressing his **love and mercy** through the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

6 Pray that students at **Oro Bible College** will receive wisdom from above as they study the scriptures and train for Christian ministry.

7 Praise God for the strong Christian commitment of students studying for ministry at the **Advent Christian School of Evangelism** in **India.**

8 Pray for God's will and intervention as the **India** Advent Christian Conference faces some difficult issues and circumstances.

9 Pray that **Beryl Joy Hollis, Barbara White,** and **Marion Damon** will know God's will and sense his guidance as they serve him today in India.

10 Praise God for the **generous response** of Advent Christians through Penny Crusade and the Day of Labor for the Lord.

11 Pray that a resolution of the civil war in **Liberia** will take hold and that Christians in that nation will be free to speak about the life-changing power of Christ.

12 As we celebrate the third Sunday in Advent, praise God that we can experience **forgiveness of our sin** and his presence in us because of Jesus Christ.

13 Praise God that the Advent Christian Church in **Liberia** is beginning to reorganize and become active in evangelism.

14 Pray for Christians in **Nigeria** as they face the potential for persecution in a nation filled with political and religious unrest.

15 Pray that God will continue to bless the ministry of **Nigerian Advent Christians** as they serve him in an uncertain situation.

16 Praise God for the many years of ministry and service that Appalachian Region Superintendent **Hal Vannoy** has given to the Advent Christian Church and pray that God will richly bless him as he retires at the end of this month.

17 Praise God for the Christian **commitment** of pastors, missionaries, and other Christian workers who seek to proclaim his truth.

18 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they labor for the cause of Jesus Christ in the inner city of Memphis.

19 On this fourth Sunday of Advent, ask God to touch the hearts of those who face **loneliness and despair** during this time of the year.

20 Pray that national Advent Christian missionaries in **Malaysia** will see God's Spirit touch the hearts and lives of those they proclaim the gospel to in this officially Islamic nation.

21 Praise God for the strong Christian commitment and vision of Advent Christian conference leaders in **Japan**.

22 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they continue working toward planting an Advent Christian congregation in West Kobe, Japan.

23 Praise God for the opportunities **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** will have to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions in local churches during the coming months.

24 Pray for **Ruth Soucier** as she communicates Christ's love to Japanese students.

25 **Joy** to the world; the Lord is come; let earth receive her King!

26 Pray for **Carlos Quintero** as he oversees the work of Advent Christian missions in Mexico.

27 Pray that as **Alberto Gomez** communicates the gospel to people in El Florido, many lives will be touched for Jesus Christ.

28 Praise God for several people who have expressed a desire to serve with Advent Christian World Missions.

29 Pray for World Missions Director **Harold Patterson** as he provides leadership and direction for the future of Advent Christian mission efforts.

30 Pray that God will give his strength and guidance to those who serve at the Advent Christian **denominational offices** in Charlotte.

31 1994 is almost here. Pray that many people will be reached for **Jesus Christ** throughout the world in the year to come.

Cookie Jar continued from page 13

Killed with the kisses of deity

We run partly because we don't want to know the truth. We run partly because we enjoy doing wrong. (An observation John implies which goes without saying.) We run partly because we're afraid of the judge.

Beloraba Whichcote felt fear as she struggled to tell her uncle about how she had done what he had not given her permission to do. And the moment her confession ceased, she heard a "sound like a sob" coming out of the darkness. She "howled like a wild beast" thinking he was horrified by her wicked act.

"Please, uncle, will you kill me!" she cried.

"Yes, yes, I will kill you, my darling!" he answered. "This way! This way!" And stretching out his arms, he found her in the dark, drew her near to him and covered her face with kisses.

It really is a miracle. The Father lovingly passes the airbrush of grace over a soul pitted with the acne of guilt. The result: a portrait to be proud of. No redness. No bumps. No scarring. What an artist! The Master makes a perfect heart. And he never again shows us an untouched photo. ❑

France continued from page 17

Parents categorically denied all charges of abuse in the judgments and psychological reports, stressing that their children were under trauma from being seized from their homes, held in state custody for almost six months, and subjected to interrogations that were prejudiced against their families and their Christian faith.

NNI contacted the Association for the Defense of the Family and the Individual, which has charged the church with being a dangerous cult, but President Jeanine Tavernier was out of the office for an extended period and other staff members could not comment on the case. NNI also repeatedly telephoned former church member Jean-Claude Plantier, who has made allegations against the church, but was unable to reach him.

On August 5, parents filed appeals to the July 30 rulings, although the cases will not be heard until at least the end of September. The parents also filed an appeal on August 9 with the European Court on Human Rights, which is part of the Council of Europe. France is one of 20 European countries that recognize the court's decisions as binding. ❑

Elisabeth Farrell is a correspondent for News Network International, a news agency that reports on persecution and religious freedom issues around the world.

To The Point

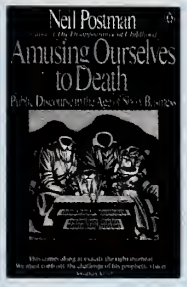
A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

The Christian proposition is that the discontents, the feelings of alienation, the inability to be "at home" with the existent reality, are all signs of health to be celebrated. The fatal disease is the premature "resolution" of that which cannot and must not be resolved except by resolution of all things in the consuming lordship of Christ.

—*Richard John Neuhaus in* Freedom for Ministry

What we do flows from what we are. This character-oriented perspective is totally foreign to our achievement-oriented society. . . where we look at what people do rather than who they are. And it goes against everything in our consumer-oriented religious culture, where we pick and choose churches on the basis of fellowship or outreach programs or music or location or convenient parking. Rarely do we hear believers say, "I decided to join this church because of its character as a holy community." Nor do most choose a church on the basis of its capacity to disciple and equip them for ministry. . . If the church is the Body, the holy presence of Christ in the world, its most fundamental task is to build communities of holy character. And the first priority of those communities is to disciple men and women to maturity in Christ and then equip them to live their faith in every aspect of life and in every part of the world.

—*Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn in* The Body



. . . In an age of advanced technology, spiritual devastation is more likely to come from an enemy with a smiling face than from one whose countenance exudes suspicion and hate. . . Big Brother does not watch us, by his choice. We watch him, by ours. There is no need for wardens or gates or Ministries of Truth. When a population becomes distracted by trivia, when cultural life is redefined as a perpetual round of entertainments, when serious public conversation becomes a form of baby-talk, when, in short, a people become an audience and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk; culture-death is a clear possibility.

—*Neil Postman in* Amusing Ourselves to Death

The church is to be a loving church in a dying society.

—*Francis Schaeffer*

We would like a church that once again asserts that God, not nations, rules the world, that the boundaries of God's kingdom transcend those of Caesar, and that the main political task of the church is the formation of people who see clearly the cost of discipleship and are willing to pay the price.

—*William Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas*

We need. . . a church that will teach us moral values, defend national and human dignity, provide an asylum for trampled hopes. But we do not expect the church to become the nation's political representative, to formulate political programs and to sign political pacts. Whoever wants such a Church. . . is—whether he likes it or not—asking for the political reduction of the Christian religion. For we do not need a church that is locked up, that is hidden behind the walls of a particular political ideology. We need an open church that "takes the whole world into the arms of Christ."

—*Adam Michnik, Polish historian, cited by Bud Bultman and Harold Fickett in* Christianity Today

The church exists. . . to set up in the world a new sign which is radically dissimilar to [the world's] own manner and which contradicts it in a way which is full of promise.

—*Karl Barth*

If the church makes anything other than God's truth and resources the principle of its existence, Christians risk living unauthorized lives of faith, exercising unauthorized ministries, and proclaiming an unauthorized gospel.

—*Os Guiness in* No God But God

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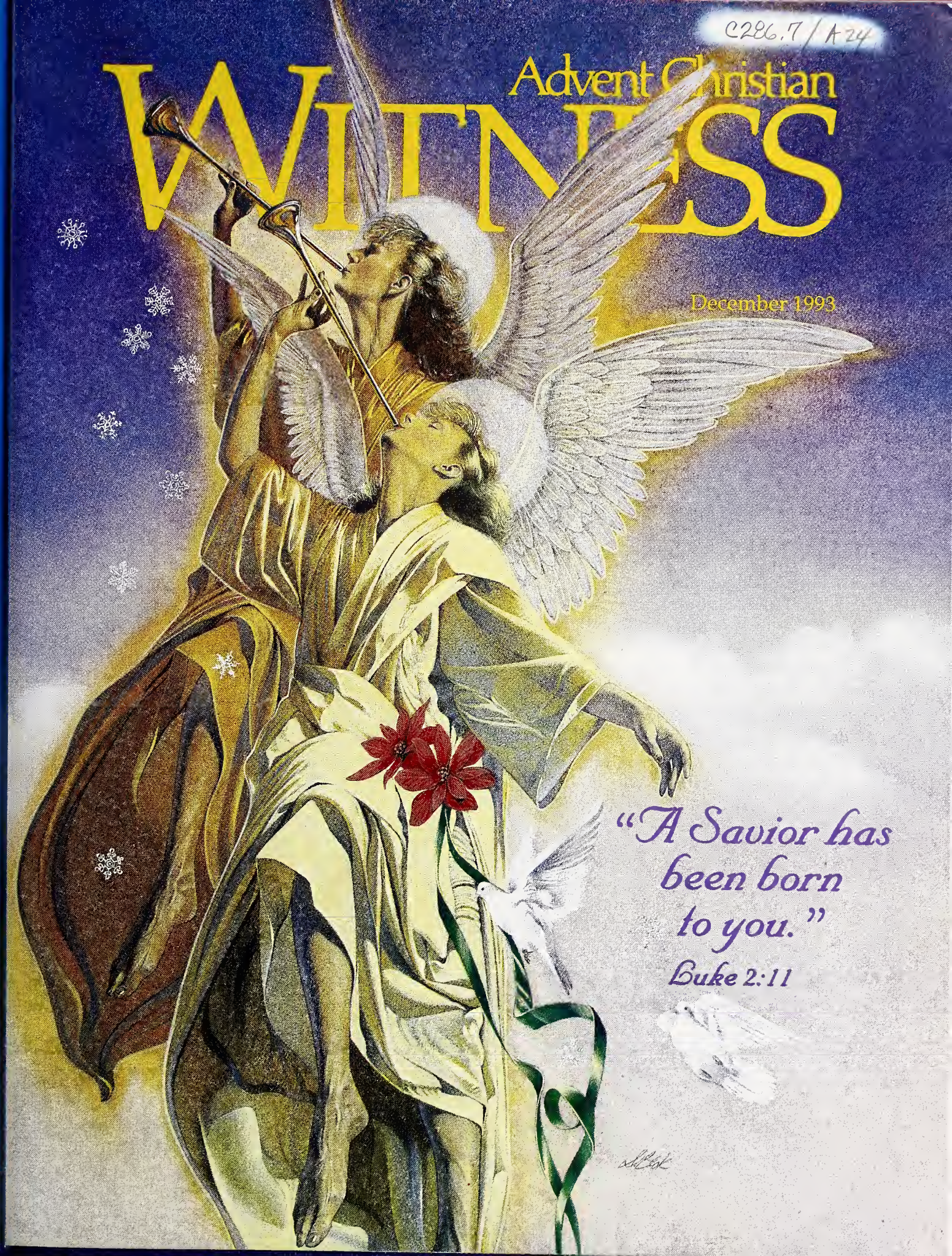

"A Savior has been born to you."
Luke 2:11

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Clayton Blackstone views the birth of Christ through the eyes of the angel who announced the news to the shepherds.

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While watching his son's Little League team struggle through a difficult loss, Douglas Simmons discovered some important lessons for churches.

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As the Clinton Administration appears ready to recommend ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, observers are debating its impact on religious freedom.

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Many are lost in the far country—lonely, wounded, and struggling. William Gaultiere suggests that God stands ready to pour out his grace and mercy and bring healing to broken lives.

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On the Cover

Announcing the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Volume 41, Number 10

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Christmas With a Personal Touch

MATTHEW'S account of Jesus' birth contains a sentence that gets at the heart of Christmas for me: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23). It's the same idea that John drives home when he writes, "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

What Matthew and John teach in these passages sets the Christian faith apart from all other religions and ideologies. You see, the Christian faith is much more than a moral or ethical code. It's much more than a set of religious customs or church rituals.

The Christian faith focuses on a person—Jesus Christ. God chose to reveal himself to us not through codes, customs, or rituals but through a person. If we want to know what God is like, all we have to do is look at Jesus.

Jesus is not merely a religious teacher like the Hindu Upanishads, the Buddha, or Mohammed. Within him we find the very nature and essence of God. When the disciple Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus responds with these words, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The apostle Paul writes that Jesus, "being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:6-7).

Knowing God

Christmas does not merely mark the birth of a good man or great religious teacher. The birth of Jesus Christ demonstrates the reality of Matthew's words; "Immanuel—which means 'God with us.'" Through Jesus, we see what God is like. We see God's justice, mercy, love, indeed all of God's character expressed through the life of Jesus.

That brings great comfort and hope to me. Celebrating Christmas reminds me that my allegiance is not to a political ideology, a moral code, or a set of customs. It's to a person—Jesus Christ. Christmas also reminds me that through Jesus, God identifies with the struggles we face as we live. We don't serve a God who has no conception of the physical and emotional struggles we face.

And celebrating Christmas reminds me of how easily we find it to limit God's grace. The birth of Jesus reminds us that no sin or struggle is too big for God. His mercy and forgiveness is available for the asking, no matter what our race, our family background, or our economic status.

As he began his ministry, Jesus declared, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15). Christmas is another reminder of that good news. We don't have to settle for the misery of sin. But we can be overcomers as we discover the hope of God's kingdom. ❑

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

AS YOU PREPARE to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, on behalf of the *Advent Christian Witness* and all of the Advent Christian General Conference staff, it's my privilege to communicate our prayers and best wishes to you for a joyous holiday season and a prosperous New Year. May God richly bless you and your family during this special time of year. And thank you for your readership of the *Advent Christian Witness*. Our goal is to produce a magazine that will not only provide hope and encouragement, but stretch your thinking and Christian living. We appreciate you and the time you take to read. ❑

IT'S A MYSTERY TO ME

Clayton Blackstone
Lewiston, Ida.

Author's Note: This article attempts to view the birth of Christ through the eyes of the angel who announced the news to the shepherd. While the actual account is fictional, I have attempted to weave the biblical text and resource material together to form a realistic chronicle of the events which took place on the memorable evening.

ALLOW ME to introduce myself. I'm Mychalis, the angel who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds a couple of thousand years ago. I know I don't look like an angel. No wings, halos, or white flowing robes, but I'm an angel just the same. Sorry that my appearance ruins the image your artists have built up over the years. They certainly possess extraordinary imaginations! Where they come up with such likenesses I'll never know.*

I thought the writer of Hebrews put an end to such idle speculation when he wrote that people may entertain angels without knowing it when playing host to guests. But I was wrong. We angels don't look a whole lot different from humans except when we've just come from the presence of God.

I wish I could tell you what it's like here, but your language limits my ability to describe it fully. Only one of your species ever experienced the thing we enjoy all the time, except, of course, when we are on a mission. Moses once suggested that if he would be allowed to see the Divine One he would be satisfied. Well I'm here to tell you that one glimpse is never enough if you can withstand the first one.

Moses beheld what your theologians call a theophany—an appearing of Jesus before he actually took on human form. The effect wowed the Israelites for days. People could not look at him. His face glowed with such an intense light that he had to wear a veil. Looking into his eyes was like staring into the sun at noon. But it faded as the days passed. It always does. Moses eventually returned to normal.

God's glory rubs off on the people who spend time with him. So, if we angels appear visually overwhelming, it's because of where we've been, not who we are.

Singing like you've never heard

I know you're anxious to hear more about the night I visited the shepherds, but let me tell you a little bit about myself first. God created me to be his messenger. (That's what *angel* means, you know.)

There are millions of us, although you can identify only two by name: Gabriel and Michael, God's right hand angels. Lots of people refuse to acknowledge our presence. Believe it or not, even during Jesus' day when a more religious flavor permeated the culture, the Sadducees, one of the two leading denominations within the Jewish faith, denied our reality.

We've been around almost forever although most of our work takes place behind the scenes. We helped choose a wife for Isaac. Encouraged Jacob when he left home. Attended to

* **Artist's response:** Everybody's a critic. —DP

Jesus in the garden as he struggled with his impending death on the cross. Rolled the stone from the entrance of the tomb on Resurrection Day. Helped Peter out of jail. And a lot of other things we've never gotten the credit for. One of these days, we'll have some stories to tell you!

We enjoy helping you folks out. We love doing what God asks of us. But, singing to our Creator really gets our motors running. Maybe you've read about our songfests in St. John's Revelation. It's a joyful sound for droopy ears and sagging spirits. Millions and millions of us singing songs like "Holy, Holy, Holy," "Worthy Is the Lamb," and "To Him Who Sits on the Throne." I suppose it sounds rather boring to you since the things you call worship services tends toward the dull side, but there is nothing we would rather do.

A night to remember

I could go on for hours, but I know you want to hear more about "that night." It was in the spring of 5 B.C. as I remember it. Hardly December 25! The records of Bethlehem General disappeared long before believers got around to honoring his birth.

LOOK! LOOK WITH WONDER!

Look! Look with wonder! There within the stall
Lies the Creator in his mother's arms
O worship him, our King, the Lord of all!
Born to redeem us–not with baby's charms,
But to grow up to manhood, then to die
The perfect Sacrifice–the Lamb divine–
Giving his sinless life that you and I
May have eternal life! O see his sign
The star–brilliant in velvet skies
Lighting the stable and revealing One–
Messiah, child of Mary, who shall rise
Conqueror of death–God's only Son!

–Miriam Snow Priebe

So as I was saying, the spring of 5 B.C. What do you mean, "Am I sure my memory hasn't faded?" *Now, look here. . . .* My apologies for that little outburst. I keep forgetting you don't know a great deal about Palestine or shepherding. Let me explain.

The terrain surrounding Bethlehem looks a great deal like the area surrounding Lewiston, Idaho. Barren hillsides rise from the plains. "Thars gold in them thar hills" the old timers used to say as they stared through the shekel signs in their eyes at the sheep pastured on the hillsides. In addition to wool, meat and milk, folks raised stock to sell to pilgrims who traveled to the temple to offer yearly sacrifices. Jerusalem was only six miles from Bethlehem.

And so you won't think I've lost my marbles, any shepherd with half a brain would not be caught out in December weather in Palestine if he could help it. Although they usually carried a tent with them, these fellows lacked the comforts of twentieth century camping equipment. Winters were wet and chilly and the sheep's caregivers would not routinely spend their nights in an open field, exposed to the wind and the rain.

It was spring when I visited the shepherds. Poor guys. Not much of a life by angelic standards but they were good at what they did. Each flock of sheep contained animals from several families. The shepherd would allow them to graze during the day, and then gather them into a safe place for the night. While in the hills, they spent the nights corralled in caves but rested in sheepfolds when pastured on the plain outside Bethlehem.

Shepherds built these enclosures out of stones or thorn bushes and spent the night sleeping at the entrance to prevent the sheep from wandering out. Since the animals knew the voice of their shepherd and responded to his unique call, several flocks could be housed in the same fold. Years later, when Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice," folks knew exactly what he was talking about.

People tended to look down on shepherds. Rabbis considered them violators of the strict Sabbath laws. But what could they do? Sheep had to eat seven days a week. Lions, bears, hyenas, and jackals seldom took a night off from hunting. They were good people, who, like everyone else in the Middle East in those days, anticipated the coming of Messiah.

> I still don't know why God sent me to shepherds. Perhaps it was his underrated sense of humor.

The area buzzed with speculation. Everybody knew about Daniel's 70 weeks of years prophecy. According to scholars' calculations, the decree to rebuild the temple in 457 B.C. marked the start of the prophetic calendar. (Some of you might not be familiar with this vision, and I don't have time to explain now. If you want to do a little research on your own, you'll find the necessary information in Daniel 9:10-27.) Time was almost up.

I still don't know why God sent me to shepherds. Perhaps these men were the only ones up at that time of night. It was the birthing season and they had to keep an eye on ewes ready to give birth to their lambs. Perhaps it was his underrated sense of humor. I'm sure he smiled when fellows on the outs with the religious elite arrived at the scene before anyone else to worship God in flesh.

The shepherds were sitting around the fire telling stories when I interrupted their reverie. Needless to say, I scared them out of their sandals. I'd just come from a day of worshipful celebration in the presence of God so I glowed with his glory. And since

none of them had ever even seen an angel before, they didn't know quite what to expect.

I told them not to be afraid because I came with great news. A Savior, the Messiah, had been born in Bethlehem that evening. I didn't instruct them to go see him, but I assumed they would. I even told them they would find him in a manger. Imagine! The long awaited deliverer of Israel cradled in a cattle trough. They took me at my word. Didn't even question the unlikely announcement.

And while they stood staring at me, some of my heavenly friends joined me for the encore. The still night echoed with the thunder of heavenly praise:

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on
whom his favor rests."

We left as quickly as we had appeared. The shepherds hung around for a few minutes discussing what to do next. They wanted to go, but knew if something happened to any of the sheep their wages would feel the pinch. I listened as they briefly considered the potential impact that abandoning their responsibilities would have on their economic status and job resumes. The group discussion ended quickly with a consensus. "Let's go to Bethlehem to see what the Lord told us about."

I love what I do. I tell and God gets the credit. It's great!

They covered the three-quarters-of-a-mile into town in record time and quickly scoured the small village for signs of new life. They found the exhausted parents and an hour-old-baby in a hollowed out cave/stable.

Lots of folks speculate about the adjoining inn. Some think of it as Bethlehem's answer to the Hilton. (It wasn't!) Others suggest that it was the guest room of Joseph's family home now filled to capacity by other members of the clan who arrived earlier in the day. (Unlikely. Family members would have been kinder to a woman whose labor pains were at ten-minute intervals.) Still others remain convinced that it was a quickly thrown together shelter erected by the Romans to house large groups of people when more conventional lodging was unavailable.

I have no intention of clarifying this issue since you humans seem to draw enjoyment from such idle musings. Frankly, it hardly matters. The only reason the shepherds cared about where Jesus was born—they wanted to know where to worship him. They came. They saw. They believed. They talked about it for days to anyone who would listen.

A moment to marvel

Sometimes I just shake my head.

I've learned a lot during the past 2,000 years. In the beginning none of us understood why God even bothered with the human race. For the most part, you've hardly been perfect stewards of the planet. While we worship, you flitter away your time on an endless succession of things which you hope will provide satisfaction and fulfillment. Don't get me wrong. I'm not pointing my finger at you alone. Your generation's no worse than any other.

Angels have a lot to learn about God's wisdom, but quite honestly, I never expected to learn it from the church (see Ephesians 3:2-13). He kept it hidden from us. We were as surprised as the shepherds as his plan began to unfold.

And when we found out that you would teach us the real meaning of worship during eternity, we just shook our heads. It doesn't make sense. How can folks who frequently stumble through the motions of worship now instruct us on something we've done with excellence for years? God says you will, but how is beyond me!

We envy you (see 1 Peter 1:3-12). We don't doubt God's love for or appreciation of us. We would do anything for him. But we've witnessed first-hand the depth of his love for you. It's a love you take for granted. A love angels long for.

I know I'm old by your measurement of time, and you probably think I don't understand the pressures of living in the real world. Some of you even wish that all you had to do was stand around and worship at the foot of heaven's throne. Maybe I can't identify with your struggles, but the shepherds can.

They knew tough times. They felt the sting of social rejection. They also understood that marveling at the occupant in the manger might spell economic disaster and cast a pall over future promotions at work. They held to messianic expectations. The mood of the country vacillated between despair and unbridled excitement as the arrival of the Promised One drew closer.

They would understand your feelings. I'm sure of it. But it did not alter the decision they made. I'd like to

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WHEN THE TIME HAD COME

When the time had come,
Long foretold, and long awaited
Anxiously
By godly men,
He came, a Child in Bethlehem.

And when the time has come,
Fully,
Foretold by prophets
And awaited by the holy men
Of all the ages,
He will come again,
Judge of all the earth,
And King, –
When the time has fully come.

–James Asa Johnson
from: *His Gift to Me*

Show Some Team Spirit

Douglas Simmons
Friendship, Me.

"BALL!" shouts the umpire. My frustration builds inside me as my son's team struggles in their quest to beat the Damariscotta Lions. Trailing by several runs, they try another pitcher. He too has an off night. "Ball!" rings out again and again from the umpire.

The whole team feels the frustration. They're out there taking up space on the field. There's no team spirit, and the pitcher carries the burden hard. As each batter on the opposing team walks his way to first base, my son's team becomes more defeated. I can't remember if it was the second or third pitcher, but one of them just couldn't do it any longer. "I don't want to pitch anymore," he cried as he threw his hands into the air.

I sat in my seat and shook my head. Then I couldn't stand it any longer. I started shouting from the stands, "Where's your team spirit? Help your pitcher! Get behind him and show some team spirit." I tried to follow that same advice. Each time the pitcher threw a strike, I praised him. "That's the way to whiz it by 'em. Come on, let's have another pitch like that." And each time the batter fouled his pitch off, I would yell, "You're ahead of his swing now, strike him out."

I could hear the team take the cue and they started encouraging the pitcher as well. "Come on, Ray, you can do it. Strike him out—chuck it right in there!"

For one inning, I could almost sense a change coming over the team. The pitcher seemed to smile. The load he carried was lightened a bit. Why? Because he found out that the team wanted to help bear the load he was trying to carry himself.

The team couldn't get back on their feet as the other side was too overwhelming for them. They were mercy-ruled in the fourth inning with the score standing at sixteen to one. And to make matters worse, this was the first game of a doubleheader.

The church is a team

I couldn't get what happened off my mind. I kept thinking about our church and my pastor. What kind of burdens did he have to bear? I guess there are pastors and churches like that pitcher saying "I can't do it alone" and ready to give up. There must be pastors and churches that can't throw strikes because they are out of team spirit.

I think that we take too easily the pastor's job and the work of the church. And I'm just as much to blame as anyone. What a rousing sermon we would hear if we shouted for the pastor like we do for a baseball team. "That's it, pastor! Strike us right out of the world and into salvation and Christian living." With the pastor and the church working together with a team spirit, imagine what could happen!

Although I'm joking a little, I do believe the Holy Spirit prompted me in this direction. What a precious commodity we have when churches and pastors know they are part of a winning team. The world keeps saying, "You're losing. You might as well give up!" But we have to remember that we have the power of the Holy Spirit. As failing humans, we sometimes forget to remind our pastor that we're behind him. ❑

Douglas Simmons is a lobster fisherman and an active participant at the Friendship, Maine, Advent Christian Church, where he has served as a trustee and a writer for the church newsletter The Coastline Fisher.

Is U.N. Document Discriminatory Towards Religion?

U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child Could Jeopardize Religious Rights

Elisabeth Farrell
News Network International

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS observers are expressing concern over growing bipartisan support within the U.S. Congress to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They say the document is vaguely worded and would severely restrict religious freedom by limiting the authority of parents.

The 54-article document, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on November 20, 1989, has been ratified by 144 countries. Twenty-six countries have not ratified it, including the United States. The Bush administration refused to sign it on the grounds that it would violate existing U.S. policy, although the Clinton administration is reportedly leaning toward it.

In order for the convention to be ratified by the U.S., the President must sign it and send it to the Senate, which would then have to pass it by a two-thirds majority vote. A group of 112 representatives has co-sponsored House Concurrent Resolution 15 urging Clinton to sign the convention. The group is bipartisan, although the majority are Democrats. A similar resolution in the Senate (Senate Resolution 70) has 41 co-sponsors: most are Democrats, although there are a number of Republicans including Senators Robert Dole, Alfonse D'Amato, Bob Packwood and Arlen Specter.

While there is support in Congress for the convention, there are also numerous opponents who argue that although it purports to protect children, it does so by undermining parents' authority to raise their children, including in areas of religion.

"When the state extends its arm intrusively into the home, it is extending its authority too far," said Senator Dan Coats. "This premise is inherent in the U.N. document, and it must be corrected. However well-intended this document may be, good intentions with guaranteed bad results are fruitless."

Opponents warn that U.N. conventions hold the weight of international treaties, and once ratified by the government they become the law of the land. Thus if the U.S. ratifies the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it would supersede all existing federal and state laws, including the U.S. Constitution. The government would become legally accountable to the U.N. to fulfill the provisions within it.

> "When the state extends its arm intrusively into the home, it is extending its authority too far."
> –Senator Dan Coats

Rights of parents ignored, opponents caution

Among the convention's articles that opponents say threaten freedom of religion are the following:

Article 2, Section 2: "State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members."

Article 3, Section 1: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." (Opponents question who decides what is the "best interest" of the child—the parents or the state.)

Article 9, Section 1: "States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the

parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence."

Article 14, Sections 1,2, and 3: "States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. . . the rights and duties of the parents. . . to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child. . . Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others."

> "Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others."
> –U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 43, Section 2: Establishes a Committee on the Rights of the Child, consisting of "ten experts of high moral standing."

According to Phyllis Schlafly, founder of Eagle Forum, the convention poses a great threat to parents' religious rights. "Parts of the child rights or 'kiddie lib' movement really mean government lawyers move in and exert their authority over the child rather than the parent having authority," she said in an interview with News Network International. "[It] is a significant danger and should not be ratified [by the United States]."

Schlafly noted that the convention is based on the concept that a child's rights originate with the convention itself or with the government. "[This is] in contrast to the American theory that individuals have inalienable rights which the government may not take away," she wrote recently in a scathing denunciation of the convention.

"Despite a vague reference to undefined 'rights and duties of parents,'" she added, "the treaty does not recognize any specific parental right to make decisions for their minor children. What will it mean to enforce the provision that makes "primary education compulsory and free to all?" Will this ambiguous provision require us to give public subsidies to private and religious schools along with government control, or could it be interpreted to ban private and religious schools altogether?"

Opponents of the convention also caution that ratification could result in layers of bureaucracy that would threaten religious freedom.

"The flowery words of hope embodied in the U.N. treaty mask a message replete with danger and subterfuge," said Douglas Phillips, spokesperson for the Home School Legal Defense Association. Phillips raised the concern that U.S. ratification of the convention would require a new government agency to police parents and enforce the convention's guidelines.

> If the U.S. ratifies the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it would supersede all existing federal and state laws, including the U.S. Constitution.

"Will taxpayer dollars pay for the creation of a Federal Bureau of Parent Investigation?" he asked. "Implicit to the convention is the requirement that signatory nations will enforce this child's rights measure by policing parents. The enforcement bureaucracy to be created must initiate the 'identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of parents whose practices are not in conformity with the treaty."

Two children's organizations support convention

Two of the chief proponents of the convention are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Children's Defense Fund (CDF).

"America's children, especially those who are now homeless, poor or hungry, deserve the rights that the convention would accord them," commented Hugh Downs, chairman of the U.S. Committee for UNICEF. "The ratification of the convention would charge all of us with accountability. . . and would send a powerful message to the international community that has always looked to America for leadership. . . And children everywhere will have acquired their own rights."

CDF, which is strongly pushing the U.S. to ratify the convention, downplays allegations that the convention gives the state higher authority than parents. "The extreme right wing has been saying that, but that's just silly," said Jim Weill, CDF's general counsel. "The convention is full of provisions that support parents and talk about parents' importance in raising children. If anything it creates obligations on the part of the government to help parents, not to get in the way of parents. It has been signed or ratified by a large number of Western democracies that are just as committed to family as we are."

Opponents of the convention, however, argue that countries that have ratified the convention are using it as grounds to discriminate against the religious rights of parents. In France, for example, which ratified the convention in 1990, the government used the convention as partial legal basis to remove seven children, all members of a Protestant church, from their homes and place them in state custody. (See "French Authorities Seize Children of Protestant Parents," *Advent Christian*

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RETURNING *to the* Father

William Gaultiere
Orange, Calif.

THE STIRRING of the chickens in the barn awoke Father early in the morning. He sat up on the edge of his bed and squinted to see in the dim early morning light. He stretched his arms toward the ceiling, straightened his toes up and then down, and flexed his thighs and calves. Rubbing his eyes and then yawning, he considered lying back down.

Finally, after hesitating some time, he rose to his feet. He lost his balance and almost fell backwards into the bed. "My I feel like a stiff, wobbly old man in the morning!" he moaned.

Father walked to the dining room area and sat down at the table. Out the window he could see the sun rising. "Oh, what a beautiful morning it is!" Father exclaimed. "I wish Elder and Prodigal were at my side to enjoy it with me. But I see Elder's dishes in the washing area. He must already be working in the fields. And Prodigal is still away. But maybe he'll come back today. What do you think Phillip? Is today the day?"

Philip was just entering the dining area carrying a fresh baked pastry, cheese, and orange juice for Father's breakfast. He sighed, "Prodigal come home today? You know you've been saying that for months. Sir, I'm sorry, but I don't think he'll ever come home!"

"Come now Philip, where is your faith?" Father replied. "If you don't believe in Prodigal, then at least believe in Yahweh."

Later that morning Father went out to check on his vineyard. He pulled one of the ripe grapes off the vine. A lump formed in his throat and his eyes began to tear as he thought about how much Prodigal loved those grapes.

Father tasted the juicy grape and looked north. Just in front of him the cattle were drinking at their trough. Philip was working in the vegetable garden. A neighbor's servants were working in one of the fields which Prodigal had sold. Beyond, Father could see that the village was just beginning to stir with people in the street. And beyond the village, way in the distance, Father could barely see some servants working in a field. But Prodigal was not to be seen.

Nowhere else to go

Prodigal *was* on his way home. He had taken the coastal route along the Mediterranean Sea. His trip across the desert had been nothing like his series of nightmares. It wasn't sweltering hot, his bare feet hadn't blistered, and he hadn't run into any huge hissing snakes or crazy cackling birds. Further, he had gotten rides on carts for most of the three-hundred mile trip home from Antioch. The last ride dropped him off just ten miles outside of Nain!

So far Prodigal's trip home had gone quite well. But the worst of his horrible nightmares was just ahead—entering the village. Just the thought of approaching the village sent chills through his body. His heart would begin to thump. His stomach would churn, his breathing would become shallow and rapid.

His mind would race. *How will I make it down the street past the gang of boys and the people in the village? Elder is going to beat me to a pulp if he gets his hands on me! And Father—what will he do? What if he doesn't accept me back as a hired servant? I don't know where I'd go!*

The more Prodigal thought about all that could go wrong, the more apprehensive he felt. His legs were becoming heavier as he neared the village. He wanted to turn around but he had no where else to go. He had to face his father, Elder, and the others in the village; he couldn't escape the consequences of his actions.

So Prodigal shuffled forward with his head dropped in shame. He repeated to himself again and again, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men. Father, I. . ."

Father had gone out to the garden to see how the onions, cucumbers, beans, and other vegetables were looking. Philip was still there plowing the dirt between the rows of plants. Suddenly, Father yelled out, "He's home! He's home! It's Prodigal!"

Philip looked and started to laugh at the old master. But then he stopped too; he saw a figure in the distance. And then he saw Father *running* across the fields. Philip was so startled that he dropped the hoe on his foot and fell backwards into an eggplant!

Philip couldn't believe his eyes. He had never seen his master run. He had never seen any man of such distinction, nor any man of his age run anywhere for any reason. But there went Father, tearing up the vegetable garden, then pushing through the cows, and then kicking up dust on the street! He was literally sprinting down the street as if he were in a foot race!

Philip squinted to see the approaching figure in the distance. *How does he know that's Prodigal? But he must know or he wouldn't run like that!*

Philip jumped to his feet, kicked the hoe out of his way, and ran after Father. *What would Father do? Would he beat Prodigal right there on the street? Why doesn't he just wait for Prodigal to get to the house?*

Just then, up ahead in the village, Sarah, one of the gossipy women of Nain, shouted out, "Look, it's Prodigal. The fool is returning home. He must be out of money! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

A small crowd of gapers began to gather and point at Prodigal. They could see him shuffling his way towards them down the street. His head was dropped in shame. His clothes were tattered and disheveled. He was covered in dirt from head to toe. And his hands were empty. The crowd made quite a chatter as they voiced slanderous thoughts about the town fool.

Others who heard Sarah scream were also gathering in the street to look at Prodigal. Among them were Joshua, the town mayor, and Rabbi Benjamin, the town priest.

Everyone's attention was on Prodigal until Sarah, who had turned around when she heard racing footsteps coming towards her from the other direction, howled in disbelief, "Look over there! It's the Father of Prodigal *running* like a mad man! And look. His robe came untied! He's exposing his undergarments!"

Everyone turned to look at Father.

Tears were forming in Rabbi Benjamin's eyes and there was a crack in his voice as he exclaimed, "See how he loves his son!"

This thought perturbed Joshua, who vehemently shook his head at the rabbi and corrected him in his deep, gravel-sounding voice, "No, no, no! You don't understand!" Then pointing his finger at Prodigal and waving his Torah in the air above his head with his other hand, he angrily insisted, "This boy deserves to be punished severely! Justice must be enforced!"

Rabbi Benjamin was calmly stroking his long, gray beard as he responded, "No, Joshua my friend. You are wrong. See the way the father runs? See how he shames himself? He has mercy on his face."

The boys in the street were also watching these events. Quickly they had put sticks in their hands, ready to poke, push, and punch "Prodi-gool the fool." But as Father came near they turned their attention upon him instead and a chant went up:

Silly old man.
Why do you run like a mad fool?
Silly old man.
Why do you expose your undergarments to all?
Silly old man.
How can you love your stupid son?

But Father kept running toward Prodigal. The crowd was following behind him to see what would happen. But none of them ran. Even Philip, as anxious as he was to see Prodigal and as much as he was curious, had gotten too tired to keep running. Only Father ran to Prodigal. He was gasping for air. Tears were streaming down his cheeks.

Prodigal had stopped shuffling and was standing still. He had raised his hanging head and was looking with wide-eyed amazement at his father.

He's running! The villagers are mocking him, and his undergarments are exposed! But his arms are open to me. How can he love me this much?

It was as if he was seeing Father for the first time.

With arms outstretched

Have you seen the Father? Have you seen him running out to welcome you home? If you follow in the penitent Prodigal's footsteps you will meet your heavenly Father like never before. He comes running to you, not with a fist but with arms outstretched. Not with a frown but with tears of compassion in his eyes. Not with anger but with forgiveness filling his heart.

And the Father brings an entou-

next page

Have you seen the Father? Have you seen him running out to welcome you home? If you follow in the penitent Prodigal's footsteps you will meet your heavenly Father like never before.

LET US SHARE CHRISTMAS

There are so many folk,
Here and there and everywhere,
Who have no song at Christmas,
No gladness that the Son of God
Still comes as Savior, Friend,
Wherever there is room for him,
And welcome:
Let us this year share faith and hope,
Our Christmas,
With those of every land.

–*James Asa Johnson*
from : *His Gift to Me*

U.N Convention

from page 9

Witness, July/August 1993.)

A number of countries that have ratified the convention have done so by attaching addenda that modified the provisions, although there is some concern that these reservations can be overturned by the United Nations. Article 51 of the convention reads: "The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present convention shall not be permitted."

Opponents argue that this gives the U.N. virtual veto power over any reservations that a nation may want to apply to the convention.

In the past, most reservations have extended the rights outlined in the convention to unborn children. (Unborn children are mentioned in the preamble, but not in the convention itself.) Among those that included such reservations in their ratification of the convention are Guatemala, Argentina and the Vatican. The Vatican also included a provision that it would interpret the articles of the convention in a way that would safeguard the primary rights of parents.

The United States has similar opportunity to apply "caveats" to the convention if it is ratified by attaching "reservations, understandings, and declarations," which the administration can recommend and the Senate can consider and amend.

Australia, which ratified the convention in December 1990, recently debated a motion to overturn ratification, based on the grounds that reservations were not applied to the convention when it was ratified.

"The government has. . . bound Australia to a convention where it is unclear whether Australian laws comply with it," noted Representative Daryl Williams in a September 1 debate in the Australian House of Representatives, "or what legislative changes are needed to enable Australia to comply with it at Commonwealth, state and territory levels. There are issues which should have been fully explored prior to ratification."

Williams also noted the "lack of clarity of the terms of the convention and the acknowledged difficulties in interpreting it, . . . the government's failure to make an express reservation at the time of ratification that would have clarified the meaning of crucial articles in the convention. . . [and] the widespread concern that this has generated in the community."

During the Bush administration, some conservatives gave limited support to the convention with the caveat that reservations, understandings, and declarations would be attached in order to modify it to U.S. law, policy, and culture.

Now, however, religious rights observers are concerned that if the Clinton administration—decidedly more liberal than its predecessor—signs the convention and sends it to the Senate for ratification, it will be without the necessary caveats.

Both Congressional resolutions urging the President to sign the convention and send it to the Senate for ratification are currently in committee stage. Although no action has been taken on them, there is reason to believe Congress may move on them in the near future.

In the meantime, religious rights observers—who are surprised the convention is not being taken more seriously—are trying to garner support to make sure this does not happen. ❑

Elizabeth Farrell is special assignments correspondent for News Network International, a news service that specializes in reporting on issues relating to religious freedom and persecution around the world. *Copyright © 1993 by News Network International.*

rage of gifts: a hug and a kiss, a robe, a ring, and a pair of sandals. He even hosts a welcome home party for his once wayward son! These fatherly gifts change Prodigal's life. Indeed they are the things that every son or daughter yearns for from their father. The gifts bring with them fatherly blessings of affection, approval, encouragement, affirmation, and honor.

I thought Sandra wanted to know a father like this. I met her a number of years ago when I was her college pastor. One day in my church office I prayed for her that God would be her Daddy and hold her in his lap, look into her eyes, and say, "I love you."

"I don't want him to touch me!" she sobbed. "My father molested me!" I stopped my prayer and looked into Sandra's tear-filled eyes. Then I listened to her story of how her father had abused her sexually when she was a girl. No wonder it didn't feel good to her for God to be "Father."

I've learned that Sandra's experience is not as rare as one would like to think. Studies suggest that as many as 10 percent of fathers either physically or sexually abuse their children. And it isn't only those who were abused by their fathers who have trouble relating to God as Father. Others also do because they were severely wounded by fathers who were critical, perfectionistic, emotionally detached, or absent.

A few months after Sandra let her secret out to me she was talking with me in my new office. I had finished the first part of my graduate education in psychology and had left my pastoral ministry to work as a psychotherapist. She sought my help saying she had decided that she needed to forgive her father's incest.

Beginning that day she spent month after month with me processing painful memories and working through her fear, shame, and anger about her childhood. Furthermore, she told me that later as a young adult she perpetuated the pattern her father started—she had sexualized many of her relationships with men. Sandra

Missions Watch

David McCarthy

Missionaries Continue to Touch Lives

Steven and Ann Lay (Japan): The Lays have moved into the new mission headquarters building. They appreciated the help of five friends from the United States, as well as volunteer work by non-Christian neighbors. Working together on the project led to further social contacts and serious conversations about Christianity.

This fall, the Lays resumed English classes and bilingual chapel services. Most of the former students returned and ten new adults were added. Tim is in his junior year of high school, and Beth Ann is taking two college level courses. She graduated from high school in spring, 1993, and will return to the States next fall to begin her college career.

Prayer Pointer: For the building of relationships that will enable the Lay family to share their faith in Christ.

Beryl Joy Hollis (India): She has been active in a variety of teaching and preaching ministries on the India field. She often leads seminars and workshops at special events held in Advent Christian churches. Some of the prayer needs she mentions sound familiar: A spirit of renewal in the lives of Christians whose love for the Lord has grown lukewarm, evangelistic outreach in the local churches, building programs, those who are taking the important step of baptism.

Prayer Pointer: For Hindus who are weighing personal decisions for Christ. Some are considering baptism, a visible break with the old life that is far more challenging in a non-Christian culture than in the West.

Ruth Soucier (Japan): Ruth is back in Japan after spending six weeks at home in the United States. She and three young adults from Japan attended three New England camp-meetings, and visited other parts of the East. Now Ruth teaches Sunday school and English classes and looks for opportunities to interact informally with her neighbors.

Prayer Pointer: For confidence in teaching Sunday school and English language classes, and that God would give her the right words as she interacts with the people around her.

Harry and Etta Soucy (Philippines): Harry and Etta arrived in the Philippines during the first week of November to begin their work with Advent Christian missions. Harry will serve as Director of Oro Bible College and teach courses there. Etta will serve as financial bookeeper and as secretary for the Philippine Advent Christian Mission. In the words of Harold Patterson, director of Advent Christian World Missions, "Harry and Etta are a valuable addition to our missionary staff. Their love for Christ and their ministry and teaching gifts are well suited to their new responsibilities. The focus of Advent Christian mission work in the Philippines has changed. Our primary goal is to equip Filipino Advent Christians to do the work of ministry. Harry and Etta will play an important role in making that happen."

Prayer Pointer: Pray that Harry and Etta will sense God's presence and guidance as they begin their new responsibilities. Pray that they will adjust well to their new enviornment. ❑

confessed to me her father's sins and her own sins and in time she found God's healing and forgiveness.

Through taking steps of honesty and trust in her healing journey with me Sandra began to see herself and others differently. Then she found that there were men who would treat her differently from her father, men who weren't abusive, controlling, and manipulating; men who had their anger and their sex drive under control. Courageously and carefully she began to form healthy relationships with other men including her best friend's husband and a boyfriend.

Sandra began to see her heavenly Father's love more clearly and she felt closer to him.

Like Prodigal, Sandra left her pigsty of shame, isolation, resentment, and sin and made the long, hard journey across the desert to go home to the Father. Unfortunately most people don't take Prodigal's journey. Many are lost in the far country—lonely, wounded, and struggling. They may be trapped there by resentment or destructive behavior patterns.

Others, like Prodigal's older brother, are stuck slaving away in the Father's fields. They are busy trying to prove themselves worthy of God's love and they miss out on the celebration of the Father's gifts of grace.

Whether you're in the far country

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"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

IT HAS MY NAME ON IT!

Fern L. Smith
Lewiston, Ida.

CLUSTERED around a prized cross-stitch clock on my dining room wall are six collector's plates. They are of more value to me than to the Bradford Exchange because each one was carefully selected with a particular grandchild in mind. Our grandchildren know one day their plate will be passed on to them. I want to mention only one in particular, belonging to eight-year-old Zach. The artist has captured with the stroke of her brush, a face flooded with anticipation as a small boy retrieves from a mailbox a letter with his name on it. Thus, the plate entitled, "It Has My Name On It."

> The power of the Most High that overshadowed Mary covers us as well.

For several years in preparation for Christmas, I have meditated on Luke's story of Mary's heart's reaction to God. However, this year it spoke to me in a more personal way. I was impressed with her troubled spirit, her fear, her questioning, and finally her response to God.

In principle, I knew what happened to Mary described some similar circumstances in my own life. My Gabriel is an inner prompting that gets my attention when God is giving opportunity to serve him and I know "it has my name on it." But there are times when I tend to push aside what he wants me to do and attempt to forget it. Occasionally, I do just that. But more often I am troubled and afraid of not only the request but my ability to fulfill it.

As I followed Mary's story, I easily related to her question, "How can this be, since. . . ?" It made me aware of the questions I have on the special "Just a Minute" tape that starts playing in my head when God asks me to do a task. Let's begin with my favorite, most used one, "How can this be, since I have not had formal training?" Or, how about, "How can this be since someone else can do it better than I?" Or, "How can this be since my schedule is already full?"

Like Mary, I plow through trembling and uncertain before moving on—focused on the obstacle, blinded to the opportunity. Mary must have perceived what lay ahead. And the picture surely did not portray glory 'round about her. Socially, spiritually, and physically; hardship was inevitable. Possible rejection, judgment, and misunderstanding were doubtless concerns. These are the emotions in the process of obedience that can create reluctance and apprehension. Yet ironically, it's only when I have recognized my insufficiency that I'm able to connect with the heavenly grace that must be trusted if I do his will. Gabriel calmed Mary's anxieties with a beautiful and comforting message; "Nothing is impossible with God." When I say, "I can't," He says, "You can." The power of the Most High that overshadowed Mary covers me as well.

Lastly, if the opportunity for serving "has my name on it," I want to be obedient. Mary was. She put herself into the hands of God and finally said, "I am the Lord's servant." After ques-

continued on page 18

Home Through a Snowstorm

Miriam Snow Priebe
Gulfport, Fla.

OH, THE BITTER cold! We peered ahead as the shifting sheets of snow made it almost impossible to see the road. Occasionally, we passed snowplows hard at work. Here and there motorists had gone off the road and were digging, sanding, and putting on chains. A towtruck passed us. We kept going.

We were students on our way back to college after Christmas vacation—married students in a day when there were few of them. Our baby son was asleep in my arms carefully wrapped in blankets as the heater in our old Chevy was not working. We both had classes on the following morning or we would probably have waited another day rather than start back in such a blizzard.

The southern tier of upstate New York is well known for terrible snowstorms and there was one stretch of road we both dreaded—a place where the wind swept across the fields unhindered, depositing great drifts in the road. "If we can make that stretch south of Warsaw we'll be OK," said my husband. I looked down at our sleeping child and thought, "What if we are stuck out here in this cold. People freeze to death in weather like this!"

As we drove on we saw fewer and fewer cars on the road. The walls of snow on either side of us grew taller until we were driving through a great canyon formed by the plows. "I'm thankful that red Ford is behind us," Charles said. "If anything goes wrong we'll have some help. Let's hope there is no one blocking the road up ahead. Once we get on the downhill run things will be better."

We had almost gotten through the worst stretch when we saw the car ahead—bogged down in the middle of the road. We slipped and slid to a stop and the car behind did the same. Charles got out, and with the young driver from the car behind, he approached the man ahead.

"The two of us will push your car and help you through," said Charles, "Then you come back and help us. We have a young baby in our car and this man has his aged grandmother with him. We'll have to be sure we all get through."

The driver agreed and after a lot of seesawing and pushing he was able to drive on to a safe place. *But he didn't stop.* Fearful of becoming stuck again, or just plain selfish, he drove on and out of sight!

"Well, that leaves just the two of us," said the young fellow wryly. "Let's hope we can do it!"

I slid under the wheel after laying our sleeping baby on the seat beside me. I was praying, "Dear God, please help us!" The two men pushed and I eased the car forward driving on until it was safe to stop. Then we walked back to help the red Ford get out.

The grandmother looked frightened but she smiled as I took my place behind the wheel. "I should have learned to drive years ago," she said. "I guess the only way I can help you is to pray."

"That's the best thing we can all do," I said.

As we pulled and pushed the red car to safety a New York State trooper drove toward us. "We're closing the road" he said, and proceeded to put up a barricade.

We shook hands all around and wished each other a good journey. The rest of the trip was uneventful. We arrived home before dark and carried our still sleeping child to his crib. He had slept through the whole event!

Lying awake and going over and over the various worries of the day, I've often thought of that trip. We were wondering if we would be stranded for the night in the intense cold, but the baby, so dependent on us in every way, slept on peacefully. He had absolute confidence in his mother and father.

There are many things in our lives that we can't possibly change, but still they keep us awake. Jesus spoke out against needless worry and reminded his followers that the Father cares for his own. May God help us to rest on his promises and to fall asleep each night trusting our Father to get us safely home! ❑

Remember ACCOUNTING

AS I BEGAN to read the New Testament once again, I started with Matthew 1:18, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. . ." I was interrupted by a sense within me that I should begin with verse one.

Shocked, I sat up and verbally answered, "But Lord, that's just the *begats.*" I had skipped the tedious series of births that created the true bloodline of our Lord Jesus.

Again, the urge deep within me prodded me to read from verse one. I felt a new sense of understanding. It was as though I suddenly knew I was to find a nugget of truth that had previously eluded me. Obediently, and with a great joy, I read, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat. . ." I continued through verse 16 and saw no great "secret" revealed.

Verse 17 reads, "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations."

As I finished I sat back to contemplate what I'd read. Finally I said, "Lord I don't see anything except the begats with their 42 generations." Now, a voice, oh, not some ethereal *voice* from the heavenlies, but rather an urging deep in my mind said, "Count them." I seemed not to notice that this voice was not natural, but from some source beyond me and I argued, "Lord, I'm good at math and know that three times fourteen equals 42." Again, the urge to count them came—stronger this time. I sensed the secret was about to be revealed.

And so, I began, "Abraham, one; Isaac, two; Jacob, three. . ."

When I made my way to Jesus I knew I had miscounted because I came up with just 41 names. I recounted. Again 41. I frowned, then decided I'd made the same error twice and changed my tack and counted from Abraham to David. Ah, 14 generations. I proceeded from David's son Solomon to the carrying away into Babylon. Again, 14 generations. At least I'd narrowed my error down to the last set of names. I began to count them, "Shealtiel, one; Zerubbabel, two; Abiud, three; until I got to Jacob, 11; Joseph 12; Jesus, 13." My brow wrinkled. "Lord, where is the fourteenth generation?" I asked aloud.

What should I remember?

I waited. My mind went blank, then as though in neon letters, two words pressed upon my brain, "Remember accounting."

I had taken accounting in high school years ago. What was it about accounting that I should remember? I looked at the list of names in Matthew 1:1-16, then at the summary in verse 17. The list didn't add up to the summary. Accounting principles tell me that the key to "balancing the books" in such a case requires me to find the missing name under another heading. So I felt the Lord was telling me that the "missing generation" wasn't missing, but was listed in "the ledger" under another heading. I shook my head.

After a moment of contemplation I sat erect and nearly shouted, "But ye are a chosen generation. . . !" That's it! Wow! The church, the body of Christ belongs in that list of names in Matthew 1:16.

Suddenly, I realized I was forcing something to happen. Deflated, I slumped back into my chair and wheezed, "Wait a minute, Lord. I don't want to get carried off on some half-baked idea." I reread verse 17. The word *unto* jumped off the page. I thought it was strange that I should be so drawn to that single word so I got out my Greek/English translation and found that the words, "unto Christ" actually may be translated "Christ and his offspring," because the Greek word *eis* which is translated *unto* means, *excess* or *continuance.*

This understanding is further solidified through Isaiah 53:8 which poses the question, ". . . and who shall declare his generation? Then that very question is answered in Isaiah 53:10. ". . . when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,

> *It was as though I suddenly knew I was to find a nugget of truth that had previously eluded me.*

he shall prolong his days. . ." For anyone who has offered up the sacrifice of Jesus for sin and has found a relationship with God through that offering, that person has become a child of God through Jesus Christ.

My head was reeling. Other Scriptures came quickly. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34). What generation won't pass? The generation of faith in Christ.

They all seemed so good, then I "stumbled" onto Romans 9:7-8 and my mind exploded into ecstasy. "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Counted? "Remember accounting."

Tears welled up and my vision of the pages blurred. A final verse walked off the pages to set the anchor pin in this "secret" the Lord was revealing to me. Psalm 22:30 reads, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be *accounted to the Lord for a generation.*"

"Remember accounting." ❑

Thomas is an inmate at Baker Correctional Institute in Olustee, Fla. where Advent Christian pastor Roy Morrison serves as chaplain.

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
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K N O W

January

1 Praise God for a **new year** and for new opportunities to serve him.

2 Pray that during 1994, Advent Christians across **the world** will touch many lives for Jesus Christ in the places where the Lord has called us to serve.

3 Praise God that **Harry and Etta Soucy** have arrived in the Philippines and are beginning their ministry at Oro Bible College.

4 Pray for **Margaret Helms** as she continues work on developing a radio broadcast and Bible correspondence course in the Philippines.

5 Praise God for the Christian commitment of Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in the **Philippines.**

6 Pray that **David Vignali** will sense God's leading as he works with a variety of responsibilities on the Philippine field.

7 Praise God for the willingness of Advent Christian pastors and missionaries in **Malaysia** to proclaim the gospel in the face of laws prohibiting Christians to speak with Muslims about their faith.

8 Pray that Advent Christian churches and leaders in **Malaysia** will continue to take advantage of the opportunities God gives them to communicate the good news of God's love.

9 Praise God for the students being trained for ministry through the School of Evangelism in **Kodaikanal, India.**

10 Pray that the Lord will intervene as the **India Advent Christian Conference** wrestles with some difficult struggles and problems.

11 Praise God for the ministry that **Barbara White, Beryl Joy Hollis,** and **Marion Damon** continue to have among the pastors, church leaders, and people they serve with.

12 Pray especially for those affected by the severe **earthquake** in central India last fall and praise God for the

important relief work being done by World Relief and other Christian agencies.

13 Praise God that he's leading people to consider **career service** with Advent Christian World Missions.

14 Pray that God will guide Advent Christian leaders from the United States, Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines as they meet to discuss **future mission strategy** this spring.

15 Praise God for the opportunities that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** have to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions in congregations here at home.

16 Pray for **Ruth Soucier** as she shares the gospel with Japanese students in her English courses.

17 Praise God for the strong spiritual leadership exercised by Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Japan**.

18 Pray that God will guide **Steven and Ann Lay** as they seek to establish a new Advent Christian congregation in the West Kobe area of Japan.

19 Praise God for several Advent Christian congregations in the United States who are active in missions through some unique **short-term projects**.

20 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they communicate Christ's love for the people of inner-city Memphis.

21 Praise God for exciting reports of many lives being touched for Jesus Christ in the cities of **West Africa**.

22 Pray for peace in nations that have suffered the ravages of civil war: **Somalia, Bosnia, Sudan,** and **Liberia**.

23 Praise God for the work of Advent Christian congregations in **Liberia** and **Nigeria** as they face continuing political unrest and the threat of opposition.

24 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they continue to establish a strong Advent Christian congregation in the El Florido district of Tijuana, Mexico.

25 Praise God for the commitment of **Tecate Bible College students** as they train to reach people in Mexico with the gospel.

26 Pray for the ministry of **Mexican Medical Mission** as they work to establish clinics and proclaim the gospel throughout Baja California.

27 Praise God for his **goodness and grace**, expressed through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

28 Pray for the **General Conference staff** and **regional superintendents** as they seek to serve Advent Christian congregations and agencies.

29 Praise God for the expansion of Advent Christian **Student Ministries** onto several new college campuses during the 1993-94 school year.

30 Pray that as many Advent Christian congregations prepare for the 1994 **Penny Crusade**, that God will use this year's crusade to make us more sensitive to the work of missions.

31 Praise God that his love has touched **you** through Jesus Christ.

MYSTERY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

think it's the same choice you will make given the same circumstances.

I wish I could recreate the scene so that you could see and feel what they did. I know that the effect's not the same because I've been on assignment for some time now. My glory has faded, but I'm as excited about my message as I was two thousand years ago: "A Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!"

It's a mystery to me why folks these days take so little time to marvel at the occupant in the manger. ❑

A graduate of Berkshire Christian College, Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Advent Christian Church of New Hope in Lewiston, Idaho.

MY NAME CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

tioning, came surrender. When Jesus calls me to a new commitment, it is in surrender followed by obedience that new growth and fulfillment is realized by his grace.

As I read further, I came across "Mary's Song" (Luke 1:46-55). What a gift of praise! I wonder now how many times I've had the opportunity, responded in obedience and thought, "phew. . . that's over," rather than praising him for putting my name on it. I must remind myself in the future to follow Mary's example by composing my own "Fern's Song." There will be words of praise to a God who chose *me?*, for his purpose.

Let me invite you to read the passage again. Has God brought a ministry before you and it has your name on it? I urge you to take a walk with Mary and let her example of trust challenge you to a new level of commitment and praise. What greater gift could we present to the One whose birth we are about to celebrate?

Prayer: Father, you are an awesome God, the Most High God, the one and only God. You had a plan for Mary's life and you have a plan for our lives. Through your Spirit, let your will be known and then just as Mary worked through her fears, we ask you to help us find our way toward obedience. Caution us when we want to rush in and fill a need that does not have our name on it. Help us to see a cleared path to becoming your servant. ❑

RETURNING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

or in the fields nearby you can return to the Father. If you step into Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son and take the Prodigal's healing journey then you'll encounter the Father's love in a new way! ❑

William Gaultiere is a psychologist and program director for the Minirth-Meier Clinic West in Orange, California. This article is adapted from Returning to the Father: A Healing Journey With the Prodigal Son, *published by Moody Press. Used by permission.*

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Evangelism is most often a process, not a sudden event. Generally, the Holy Spirit works over time in a person's life. While conversion happens at a specific moment, there is usually much that precedes it. Yet many Christians and churches are only geared to treat evangelism as an event—a decision that needs to be made *right now*, rather than a choice that frequently comes after a period of discovery. Actually, prematurely pressing for a commitment can be counter-productive.

—*Lee Strobel in* Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary

I oppose abortion, but I have compassion for the people involved, and my moral opposition has not overwhelmed my grudging acceptance of its legality. I just wish my pro-choice friends wouldn't revel so much in their triumph. Full-grown, healthy human beings cheering for their precedence over the most defenseless, vulnerable members of human society doesn't seem like such a glorious triumph to me.

—*Louis Lotz in* The Church Herald

In the past three years, I have studied many churches that have become models for healthy ministry, and others that have been turned around from severe decline to become stable and healthy once again. I have been struck by the realization that two particular conditions have been present in almost every case: the presence of a visionary leader; and a deep, lasting commitment to prayer. Clever promotional campaigns, truckloads of money, world-renowned preachers, or ostentatious buildings were not significant dimensions in these ministries. It was leaders, ordained by God, who truly sought His plans and His dreams, who (along with their congregations) were connected to His will through heartfelt, constant prayer that were the key.

—*George Barna*

The uniqueness of Christ has been compromised. For instance, the battle about religious pluralism is a battle we have to face. But we can face it on a positive note, with a loving and forceful proclamation of the good news, rather than an argumentative or angry approach. We need to return to the love of Christ, and show it.

—*Luis Palau in* National and International Religion Report

Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.

—*Martin Luther King Jr. quoted in* The Servant Leader

Dealing with burning issues without being rooted in a deep personal relationship with God easily leads to divisiveness because, before we know it, our sense of self is caught up in our opinion about a given subject.

—*Henri Nouwen*

People that choose wealth over freedom can have neither.

—*Herbert Schlossberg*

CHOICES

When Mary bore the Child
She did not know
Just who he was
And why he came.

But she knew she had been
chosen;
And, because she was *chosen*,
She *chose* to obey—
To bear *the Chosen One*—
God's Choice:

Who, when he grew,
Chose to deliver us:
Offering eternal life
To us who *choose* him.

So *God's choice*
Became *Mary's choice*
And *Christ's choice*
Gave us a *choice*!

How important are choices!

–Miriam Snow Priebe

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Advent Christian WITNESS

January/February 1994

The reason the church has no power is because we have a lot of gnorant, compromising, ndisciplined, ndiscipled people who claim to follow Jesus Christ

The world is not hungering for our doctrine but for our example. We don't love people. That's why I get along with people like Ted Kennedy and George McGovern. People are shocked to find out

Full-time Christia service. What doe that mean? That implies there's a alternative—part- half-time, vacati time, correspond service. It's either full-time or it's not Christian service.

PURSUE TRUTH

EXPOSE ERROR

A Conversation with Cal Thomas

Features

Pursue Truth; Expose Error: A Conversation With Cal Thomas 4

Cal Thomas writes with a passion for truth and with no fear of controversy. The result? A syndicated column in over 330 newspapers throughout the U.S. Ed Peratta caught up with Thomas at the Kennebunk, Me., Advent Christian Church and asked him a variety of questions concerning journalism and the Christian faith.

Hanging Up Your Habits 10

All of us struggle with habits we would like to overcome. Gary Swanson offers some positive, scriptural ways we can deal with them.

Advent Christian Women of Influence 14

On our Women's Ministries pages, Dorothy Crouse looks at the important work Advent Christian women have done throughout the 134 year history of the denomination.

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On the Cover

Syndicated columnist Cal Thomas at the Kennebunk, Me., Advent Christian Church to deliver the first annual Robert C. Hewitt Lecture on Ethics and Morality sponsored by Kennebunk Christian Academy. *photos by Michael Andrews*

Volume 41, Number 1

Advent Christian
Witness

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Is Tolerance a Christian Virtue?

PICK UP a newspaper in any major American city and chances are you'll find at least one article, opinion column, or letter-to-the-editor decrying evangelicals or Roman Catholics as narrow-minded, bigoted, hateful, and intolerant. Many folks within the fourth estate have a tough time with anyone who believes there are absolute standards of right and wrong that govern individual and corporate behavior. Combine that with the growth of political correctness within the media (a movement that involves much more than simply removing some offensive words from common usage), and it's no wonder why some Christians see any notion of tolerance as a modern secular idea that's fundamentally unbiblical.

That's a temptation we must resist because tolerance is in essence a Christian virtue. It's sad that many have bought the false idea that you cannot be tolerant, understanding, and compassionate if you believe in standards of right and wrong. But biblical Christianity has never had a problem with the coexistence of truth and tolerance. Our Christian calling is to proclaim and practice the truth of God's Word and to respect the dignity and worth of human beings no matter what their racial, social, ethnic, or economic background. To exclude either makes us less than Christian.

> It's no wonder why some Christians see any notion of tolerance as a modern secular idea that's fundamentally unbiblical. But tolerance is in essence a Christian virtue.

What does tolerance mean?

John Stott reminded me of this last April when he talked with a group of pastors and church leaders about the nature of Christian tolerance. He focused our attention on three types of tolerance that our society speaks about and suggested that while two of them are very Christian, the third is not.

The first type is legal tolerance. In nations throughout the world, there are a host of ethnic and religious minorities. And many within those groups have suffered terrible physical, emotional, financial, and economic persecution. Christians in the Sudan, Muslims in Bosnia, Kurds in Iraq, Koreans in Japan—these four well-known cases remind us that being part of a religious or ethnic minority can be dangerous in many parts of the world.

As Christians, we should seek protection for the freedoms of ethnic and religious minorities in our own country and around the world. In many nations, Christians are a religious minority and if we expect legal protection for their freedoms, then Christians in Canada and the United States need to set an example by working to protect freedom for ethnic and religious minorities at home.

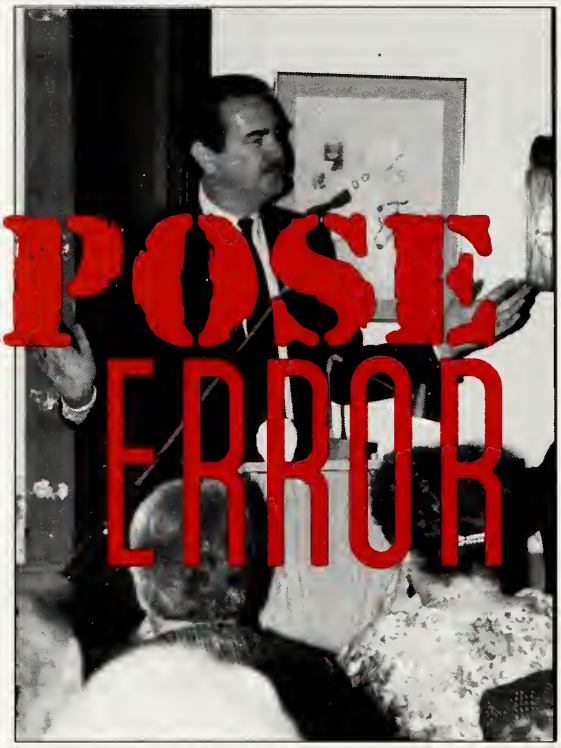
In this month when we commemorate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, we're reminded that providing political and religious freedom for all people, no matter what their ethnic or religious background, requires constant vigilance. Dr. King reminded us that the freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution apply to all citizens, no matter what their ethnic or religious heritage. The Scriptures remind us that despite the distortion of sin, all people are equally created in God's image and because of that the legal protection of political and religious freedom is an ideal distinctively rooted in the Christian faith.

In addition to legal tolerance, Rev. Stott suggested that Christians pursue what he called social tolerance—the notion that we seek to be good neighbors in our dealings with those who are

continued on page 18

PURSUE TRUTH

EXPOSE ERROR



A Conversation with Cal Thomas

Cal Thomas is a syndicated columnist whose work appears in 330 newspapers through the *Los Angeles Times* syndicate.

He has been a guest host for Cable News Network's "Crossfire" and appeared as a guest on television news shows for all three major television networks.

He was a correspondent for NBC news and public television and he admits to winning numerous reporting awards.

He writes books - *Uncommon Sense, Death of Ethics,* and the 1983 best seller, *Book Burning* to name a few.

But what he really is, he'll tell you, is a missionary, a follower of Jesus Christ whose calling is journalism. He seeks truth, juxtaposes the claims of society against God's revealed truth, and tries to bring a biblical world view to our nation.

Ed Peretta, an active member of the Kennebunk Advent Christian Church and a reporter for the Portland, Maine *Press Herald,* caught up with Cal Thomas after he delivered the first Robert C. Hewitt Lecture on Ethics and Morality.

How did you get started in journalism?

I started in radio when I was 16. I joined NBC news in Washington as a copy boy back when we had copy to carry and gender distinctive positions were not politically incorrect. And depending on your view of my profession either worked my way up or down. I spent a considerable amount of time in broadcast journalism, two tours with NBC news, and one with public television and an NBC affiliate in Houston. I landed the column in 1984 and still do some broadcast stuff, but enjoy the column and writing books more than anything I've done in 30 years of journalism.

Was there some sense that God was leading you to this field? A turning point that led you to current preeminence?

Not initially. I was like a lot of Americans. I went to church on Sunday but didn't have any personal relationship with God. I pretty much drifted and separated my religious life such as it was until I was in the midst of this struggle to be a network television correspondent, a goal I had set for myself at the age of 18. The closer I got to that goal the less satisfied I was with the advertised results. I was making pretty good money. I was getting a certain amount of status and recognition and all that, but it didn't produce the peace and happiness and fulfillment I thought it would.

So my wife and I were frustrated

and we began to search for something better and greater. I got invited to a prayer breakfast across from the White House. A federal judge stood up with some other people whom I would have regarded as successful—White House aides and some other people—and talked about everybody in that room having a personal relationship with Christ, a phrase I had never heard.

I wound up going to a Bible study. I had never studied the Bible or read it seriously and so I said, "Well you know this is interesting stuff. These people claim to have something more than I have and seem to be pretty happy about it."

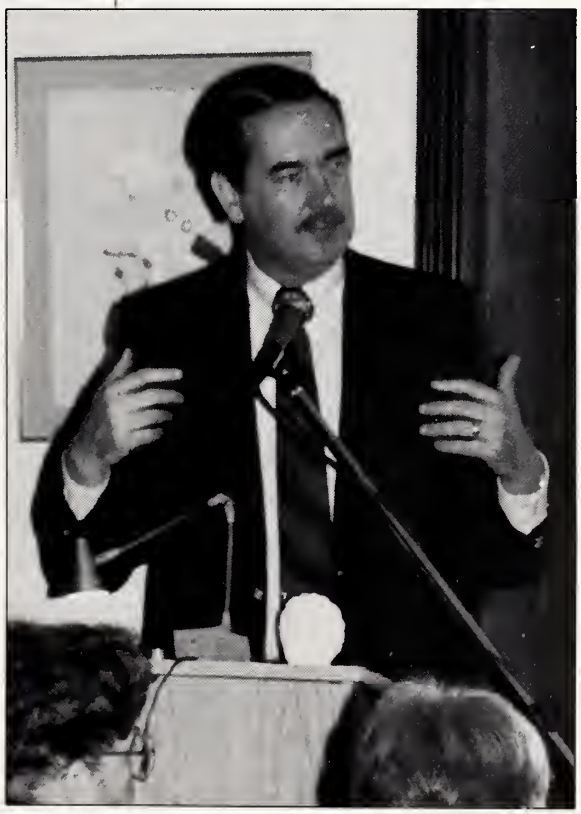
As a journalist I had looked into the claims of politicians and business leaders, but never into the claims of God. And so I started reading the Bible on my own and made some incredible discoveries. They had been there all along but I had never paid any attention to them. When I was fired in 1973 from NBC—this is the 20th anniversary of one of the greatest events of my life—out of that came a commitment of my life to Christ.

George Will has called you a moral environmentalist. Others a Christian journalist. Others use other epithets, some good, others bad. How would you characterize your professional life?

I hate labels. Christ came to re-establish a broken relationship, not to found a religion nor to establish a denomination. He didn't use labels and I don't either. I just tell people I am a follower of Jesus Christ who tries to bring somewhat of a biblical world view of the principles, history and the truth of what is in the Bible to men.

Biblical truth has proven that it works when it is applied by individuals and by nations to the mix of ideas in our culture. Most of our problems in America are not economic and political, but moral and spiritual. The culture lacks or suffers from a refusal to discuss or debate these ideas. When the Pope comes to America, for example, and talks about cultural decadence and cultural and moral breakdown all my colleagues in the press can talk about is opinion polls and they go and interview people who disagree. They can't ever get a good debate going on what he is saying.

So I am trying to bring some of these ideas into the marketplace and restore a sense of credibility for these ideas. They are legitimate ideas. Jefferson called them self-evident truths. There are a great number of people who hold them as you can see from the success of people such as Rush Limbaugh.



When you first started writing your column in 1985, you were in 30 newspapers. Now you are in 330. Why are editors becoming more receptive to your message?

I visit editors. I take them to lunch. I send them Christmas cards. I call them up. I am a member of the National Conference of Editorial Writers and go to that annual convention. I work to demonstrate something of the credibility of my ideas—that I'm not a flame thrower, that I don't fit the stereotypes. I try to be thoughtful. I use a lot of humor. Humor defuses a lot of concerns. Plus I have a very vocal constituency which is very nice about writing newspapers requesting that I be carried. All of those elements promote the column.

Recently a number of the nation's leading newspapers and other publications held a special job fair for gays and lesbians. The objective was to promote jobs for them in the newsroom. Would you comment on that?

I'm opposed to journalists who join anything. I've been approached by a number of groups to start a Christian journalist association to promote certain Christian values and ideas. I refuse. I don't serve as a paid member of anybody's board. I've been asked to join all kinds of organizations. I won't do it.

I think the public has a right to believe that the ideas—even ideas from a commentator—being broadcast or printed are freely developed and ethically derived and that nobody is promoting an agenda.

If homosexuals want to work in the news business they should be judged by the same standard as any other person—whether they can write—not what they do but whether they can report, write, be fair. I'm not against homosexuals in the press but I am against recruiting people because of a particular proclivity. It is wrong.

If you're going to do this with homosexuals, then can the pro-lifers come in and say, "Hire me, because I am a pro-lifer and want to promote a pro-life agenda in journalism?" Then everybody is going to want their claim.

We want our recognized representative who is promoting our views in journalism. If that happens, the credibility of our profession, which is already at bottom, goes into the grave.

Diversity—particularly in public schools, colleges, and universities—has become a buzzword in our society. How do you view diversity?

What we need to expose our children to is truth. There is nothing wrong with diversity or pluralism. The problem is that nobody believes there is truth anymore.

Well, we used to pursue truth. I mean is racism always wrong? Well of course it is. Is murder always wrong? Well absolutely. Where do we get the idea that diversity and pluralism mean always learning but never being able to come to a knowledge of the truth? That's a horrible condition to be in. Even Jesse Jackson was in New York talking to young inner-city kids about making correct decisions, leading a moral life. You don't have to follow a lifestyle following drugs and promiscuous sex and all this stuff. You can be somebody. That's the kind of re-enforcing message we need in this country. And if we can create another climate by inundating them with messages that it's not okay and this is the right kind of behavior.

What do you consider to be the purpose of the press in a free society?

To pursue truth and to expose error according to a generally accepted, long-proved code of morals and ethics that have demonstrated their viability.

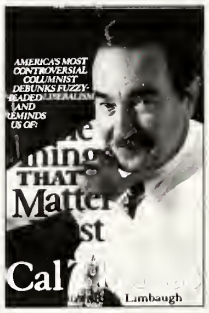
In his book, *How Should We Then Live?*, Francis Schaeffer raises the possibility of America being governed by a manipulative, authoritarian elite with no absolute values to accompany absolute power. The media would be used for manipulation, of course. Would you comment on that?

We have that in Bill and Hillary Clinton. Jefferson spoke of certain self-evident truths that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights and among these are the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In the next clause Jefferson outlined the purpose of government. He said, "and to secure these rights governments were instituted among men."

As a journalist I had looked into the claims of politicians and business leaders, but never into the claims of God. And so I started reading the Bible on my own and made some **incredible** discoveries.

To secure what rights? The rights that God had endowed. Why is that necessary for the founders to do? The founders understood something very important about people from their study of history and their observation of those currently living. They understood that men and women were flawed on the inside. The Bible calls it sin. I have never found a better explanation for who we are and why we do what we do. The founders understood that if people would not be constrained from within by the presence and power of God they had to be restrained from without because they could not be relied upon to do what promoted the general welfare—provide for the common defense, insure domestic tranquility and establish justice.

Men are not basically good, they are basically bad, otherwise we wouldn't need speed limits, radar traps, water and air controls. We wouldn't need a holocaust museum in Washington and in Israel. So people need to be controlled either inside or outside, but they do need to be controlled. Or like water they seek their lowest level.



Cal Thomas' new book

Now we've gotten away from all of that. That's what throwing the Bible out and putting condoms in was all about. No more prayer, no more Bible, no more Ten Commandments, no more sense of what is right and wrong, no more accountability to a creator God to whom we are all answerable for our lives.

The government is my keeper, I shall not want. That's what the Clintons are about. Government is now our redeemer. And Bill and Hillary are going to create a nation in which people feel secure. What Bill and Hillary need to do is not create a nation in which everybody feels secure, but create, recreate or allow a nation in which everyone has an equal opportunity to make right decisions that will benefit their own lives. That's what America has been all about, but it's not now.

You have stated that one of your purposes is getting "something out of the mind of Christ" considered on editorial pages. How do you go about doing that?

First of all, when I say something about getting the mind of Christ on the opinion pages, I don't mean to suggest that anything I write is divinely inspired. Or that my position on NAFTA or a particular piece of legislation is God's will. That is arrogant in the extreme. The only thing I do is try to bring something of the principles of Scripture to ideas in our culture. And in that sense I am fulfilling what I regard as a call of God in my life. Every follower of Jesus Christ has a call in his or her life. Your vocation, your relationships or whatever.

Where do you get ideas for your column?

The messages just come to me from very diverse sources. Take this morning. There were four different items in four different newspapers and they all seemed to be linked in my mind. There was a column in the *New York Times* about the Pope's encyclical. There was a line from a review of Madonna's latest performance in Madison Square Garden in which the reviewer said something about "decadence is now producing diminishing returns."

At the end of her act Madonna reads—I'm sure in derision—from the book of Revelation about judgment that is going to come to adulterers and fornicators and in effect judges her own act. That is incredible stuff.

Then there was the leaked report of the Tailhook investigation in which the word debauchery was used. Now you never see that, particularly in a government report. Debauchery? You mean there are limits to human behavior? Even people who consent to some of the behavior there? Then there was Jesse Jackson's visit to New York. I'm thinking of linking them together in a piece.

The messages come from various realms that are not fundamentalist right wing, conservative preachers from Lynchburg, Virginia, or Virginia Beach.

Is there any one column or work that stands out in your mind? Of which are you particularly proud?

The one that stands out in recent memory is one I did on Magic Johnson after he acknowledged that he was HIV positive. He started with the message of safe sex. I wrote saying that was distinctly the wrong message. The permissions desk at my syndicate, the *Los Angeles Times*, said that they received more requests on that one column than any other in the ten years of their existence.

I got a note from a priest down in the Virgin Islands. He had copied it and put it in his church bulletin. I got letters and notes from all over the world. There's a bunch of nuns out in Iowa at a convent who read my stuff and write me little notes of encouragement. Cardinal O'Connor wrote saying he put me on his prayer list. Little stuff like that is very gratifying.

Any personal struggles—even persecution—in the pursuit of your career because of your faith?

Oh, every day. I mean we're fighting a war. And there are casualties. Struggles involving relationships. Some that are very close to me. My own kids. When you get involved in war you wrestle with the real enemy. Satan is real. You say, "How do you know?" Because I meet him several times every day. But greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. So you understand that. You acknowledge that and you don't retreat. Pray regularly. I read my Bible and do my devotions every day. More often than I go to the gym which I should do. God gives you the power to overcome as you need it.

What advice can you give to a believer working in a secular newsroom?

I tell a little story which gets to the heart of your question. I was down in Florida a year or two ago and a guy got me aside after I tried to convince his editor to take my column and he said, "You know, I'm the only Christian on the staff here. I'm really getting frustrated. My ideas are hardly ever put into any of the editorials. I'm always being out-voted. I'm thinking of quitting and going into another line of work."

I said, "Let me ask you a quick question. Let's say it's 1957 and you are a CIA mole who has just penetrated the politburo of our archenemy the Soviet Union. Would you be complaining that you were the only CIA mole in the politburo? You ought to be thanking God that you are here. I want you to stop complaining and start loving your colleagues. Take your boss out to lunch and not even talk about God for an entire hour. Do you think you can do that? Find out about his family. You know his wife's name? How many kids does he have? What are his frustrations? What are his problems? Find out something about him. Instead of laying yourself on him, draw him out and by that you'll be saying you care about him.

"Don't expect results overnight. Because they already think you're a nut. Start demonstrating your love for these people and then you won't be able to keep them from asking about your faith after a year or two years. You'll have loads of opportunities. But stop complaining."

Mission field? Oh, that's someplace you go **5,000** miles away. No, no. It's wherever God has placed you. You can reach people, I can reach people for Christ who an ordained person can't reach because they don't have the **access** to them.

The world is not hungering for our doctrine but for our example. We don't love people. That's why I get along with people like Ted Kennedy and George McGovern. People are shocked to find out they're my friends. I'm happy to say they are. Don't you start telling me about their legislation and their behavior. That's a separate category. But I care about them and a lot of other people. That's what opens the door and that's the kind of attitude you need. If you sit around pounding the pulpit and condemning people to hell you'll have no friends. And Jesus was a friend of sinners. So if it was good enough for him I want to be their friend, too.

You have expanded the normal meaning of missionary to include vocations including your own. Would you elaborate on that?

I think we have unfortunately

misconstrued what the mission field is. I do this little talk in which I go through some of the favorite words—non-biblical words—in the church. For example I was once asked to do a retreat and I said I don't do retreats. They said, "Well we'll pay your gas expenses and your lunch."

I said "No, that doesn't have anything to do with it." I said I don't do retreats I only do advances. Now you see it gave me an opportunity to go and to talk about these words. Full-time Christian service. What does that mean? That implies there's an alternative—part-time, half-time, vacation time, correspondence service. It's either full time or it's not Christian service.

Mission field? Oh, that's someplace you go 5,000 miles away. No, no. It's wherever God has placed you—in Maine, Washington, wherever, and in whatever you do. Whatever your vocation is is your mission field. It's not less and it's not greater because you are or are not ordained. It's where God has placed you. You can reach people, I can reach people for Christ who an ordained person can't reach because they don't have the access to them. And so since I carry around and every believer carries around the person of Jesus Christ in them, they are a missionary. They are appointed by him and they are going places with him within them where the ordained can't go. And since God has no favorites—he cares about the unemployed, and the President and everybody in between—it gives all of us a chance to have our own mission fields. When you start thinking like that your life is transformed from being one of a victim or one who has to react to the culture to one who is triumphant and can prevail against it.

What advice can you give young believers thinking about going into journalism?

First, be sure of the calling in your life, not just have something you like to do. My initial desire and dream was to go into show business. Most importantly you need to be acquainted with the Word of God and the mind of Satan as well as the mind of Christ. That's why C.S. Lewis has been such an enormous help to me, especially *The Screwtape Letters*. There's an adversary out there. As you get older that enemy becomes more sophisticated. He doesn't pull up in a car, open the door and say, "Hey, your parents have been hurt and I've been asked to take you there." He tries to destroy you in more subtle ways. So, understand where the battle is.

Then you really have to be really good. You have to read everything the world does and know it better than they do. You've got to read the *New York Times* and ten newspapers a day, read books and exercise your mind. And begin with a standard—the Word of God, the truth—and then measure everything else that comes into your mind by that standard and you will be victorious.

What can Christians who are not journalists do to help win the civil war between Christian and secular world views?

Sometimes newspapers accept guest columns. The letters to the editor page is one of the most read sections in the newspaper. A well-informed body of believers is extremely important. An awful lot of people just don't read their newspapers anyway.

We are called to be salt and light. The light is the Gospel, the salt is the preservative of the culture. And I find an awful lot of believers are not being informed accurately about public affairs.

The other side is well-informed. They write. They lobby. The gay lobby is the most effective political organization in the country. They are singularly focused and if we realize that government is not going to bring in the revival that we need, we do have an obligation to be salt and retard the effects of consequences of sin.

Then I think we can work in our own little areas. We can speak to the individual woman in a crisis pregnancy situation or a pornography problem or legalized gambling. Then we don't have to worry about the Supreme Court or the Congress.

We should be concerned not with results but obedience. A lot of people say, "Well, will it make any difference if I get involved?" That is none of your business. If God has commanded you to do something, you do it and leave the results to him.

If we get the church's act together then we'll be able to speak with real power to the state, but not before. They don't respect us. Why should they?

What do you hope to accomplish in the next three to five years with your agenda?

I stopped setting long-range goals some time ago. I've been enjoying life on a day-by-day basis. I'd like to see my kids turn out all right, my wife happy. There are some more books I would like to write. I have a new one coming out next spring that I'm very excited about called, *The Things that Matter Most*. I got Rush Limbaugh to do the foreward guaranteeing a few sales anyway. And I got an endorsement from Ronald Reagan who never endorses anybody's book. The book is an examination of the nine broken promises of the baby boomers, the '60s people who are now running and ruining the country. And it's got humor in it, lots of pithy stuff. I'd like to see that do very well and establish me as a mainstream marketplace book writer and go and write some other books after that.

What are the two or three most critical issues facing Christians in the next ten years?

The most critical is biblical illit-

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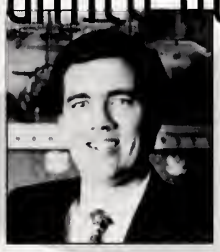
Family Builder



William Batson

The Tone of the Home

KIDS CAUSE stress—no doubt about it. Child-raising is stressful business. Children can be so demanding. By definition they are immature, unpredictable, selfish, and self-serving. The most patient, flexible, and mature adults can relent under the strain.

But is it all one way? Are parents always the innocent victims of their child's misbehaviors? No. We can be a source of stress for our children too. Fundamentally, it's the parents who establish the tone and character of a family.

Encouragement is important

When parents substitute encouragement with harsh criticism, the foundation of a healthy parent-child relationship slowly deteriorates. Verbal abuse exists in far too many of our homes. It can be as damaging as physical abuse. Emotional scars caused by constant criticism are not fixed the way broken bones are. I am not minimizing the tragedy of physical abuse, but only want to underscore the emotional abuse of children that can endure a lifetime. As parents, we clearly have the responsibility for setting the tone for an encouraging home atmosphere.

Encouragement is an indispensable skill for improving relationships and building self-confidence. William Barclay says an encourager is one who "puts courage into the faint-hearted, one who nerves the feeble arm for fight, one who makes a very ordinary man cope gallantly with a perilous and a dangerous situation" (*New Testament Words*, p. 221).

Instead of pulling apart from our children when trials come into their lives, we are to be at their side, holding them up against the pressures, giving them the stability to stand against the floods of adversity. Our children covet parents who encourage them to feel able to meet the formidable demands of the world.

A child needs to know he or she is a highly respected treasure in a parent's eyes. For a child to feel she is fifth place in her parents' lives can be a crushing blow. Gary Smalley and John Trent tell of Walter, a pastor who asked his son what kind of position he felt he occupied in his father's life. "I've always felt like it's been ministry, ministry, ministry, ministry, and then family." Many children will spend a lifetime languishing in an emotional cubbyhole from being *lowlisted*—afraid and unwilling to break out of it.

Steps to encourage

An encouraging parent will take steps to make sure that children occupy a place of significance in their lives. That knowledge will be a tremendous boost to a child's feeling of value and significance.

What can a parent do to encourage a child? Here are a few suggestions:

1. *Focus on the assets and strengths of the child, rather than the weak spots.* You may have to make a paradigm shift where the negative personality traits are viewed as simply positive ones carried a little too far. For example, a child who talks too much (negative) is a child who likes to share (positive). A daughter who is domineering and bossy is a child who exhibits leadership.

2. *Verbally communicate what the child does that you like or appreciate.* Rehearse explicit comments that focus on their assets and strengths. Make use of cards and letters to highlight these talents.

3. *Recognize the child's effort and improvement in accomplishing a task.* When your child is successful, help him or her to be accepting of the success. Praise it. Celebrate it. Don't rob it of its glory by saying, "Yes, but you know you have a long way to go."

4. *When the child fails, nurture her or him with reassurance.* Help the child to accept and learn from mistakes. Don't criticize, and try not to show disappointment. We cannot prevent our children from failing, but we do have the power to normalize failure and abate its negative impact. It's helpful to sit down with the child and say, "let's see what we can learn from this." Above all, work on providing unconditional acceptance. Clearly commu-

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Hanging Up YOUR *Habits*

Gary Swanson
Silver Spring, Md.

JOHN FORESTER'S heart must have almost stopped when he went to his barn one weekend morning and discovered that a 1,200-pound pregnant moose had decided to take up residence there. Because his property is near Grand Teton National Park in northwestern Wyoming, Forester was used to seeing an occasional moose, but never up this close. And it looked like this moose had come to stay. Plenty of water and hay under a covered roof—what more could she ask?

So when Forester tried to get into the barn to feed his horses, Mean Mildred, as he named her, charged and drove him off. He returned with a rifle and fired a couple of rounds in the air, but "she turned right around and turned her ears flat and came right at me," he said. He dived into the safety of some nearby bushes.

By Monday morning Forester had to escort his kids to their school bus with a rifle in his hand. So he called the game and fish agency, who sent officer Tom Tillman to see what he could do to get Mean Mildred out of the barn—after all, the horses were getting hungry.

Officer Tillman tried a gun that shoots whistling firecrackers. Mildred wasn't impressed. "I chased her around for a while," Tillman said laughingly, "and then she chased me around for a while. She was pretty aggressive."

Tuesday morning Tillman decided to take more drastic measures. He returned with a tranquilizing gun, but the moose nonchalantly shook off the darts. Then, as the two men discussed further tactics, Mean Mildred leaped up, bolted over the fence, and ran away.

Sometimes a bad habit takes over our lives the way Mean Mildred adopted John Forester's barn. And whatever we try to do to remove the habit, nothing seems to work. It just hangs on tenaciously and we feel powerless to overcome it.

It looked like this moose had come to stay. . .

Actually, of course, a habit should come as no surprise to us. It is, after all, a pattern of behavior that we ourselves have programmed into the computers we call our brains. Explaining how you form a habit in your brain can get overly involved in a lot of scientific words like "dendrite" and "axons" and "cytoplasm." Basically, however, your brain processes messages and sends them on to different parts of the body through nerve cells. Any repeated thought or action helps to build up an electrochemical pathway through the nerve cells—the more repetitions, the stronger the pathway. And researchers have found that this kind of pathway can probably never be erased.

Overcoming habits

So does this mean that you can't do anything about a bad habit? Are you doomed for the rest of your life to biting your fingernails, cracking your knuckles, overeating, or smoking? Not at all. Here are some suggestions:

1. *Ask God's help.* The Bible says that you cannot expect to make any

permanent change in your life without his help. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:15, NIV). Everything else you can do to break a bad habit must be based on a realization that your ability to do so comes from God. "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13, NIV).

2. *Choose a good time to change.* "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1, NIV). The holidays are probably not the best time to begin a campaign against overeating. Anytime you may experience more stress than usual is probably a poor time to try to quit smoking. Stress actually reinforces bad habits. You need to make the breaking of a bad habit as easy for yourself as you possibly can. Whatever advantage you can turn to your own favor is simply good planning.

3. *Focus on one habit at a time.* Don't try to overcome several at once. And almost any goal you may set for yourself is easier to accomplish by breaking it up into smaller goals. These smaller goals make the whole program look much more manageable and much less intimidating. As Mark Twain said, "Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time."

4. *Analyze your habit.* Make a list of the times and places that you most often exhibit the behavior you want to change. If you're trying to do something about snacking between meals, you may find that you often gravitate subconsciously toward the kitchen—or a snack machine at school or at work—at certain times of the day. Then you can consciously arrange to be somewhere else during those times. One of the biblical principles of overcoming temptation is to avoid it if possible. Eve had no business being anywhere near the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

5. *Replace the bad habit with a good one.* Don't forget that there are good habits as well as bad ones. Theologian Nathaniel Emmons said, "Habit is either the best of servants, or the worst of masters." You use good habits to complete many of your routine tasks throughout the day. Aren't you glad you don't have to think your way through the process of tying your shoes every morning? or brushing your teeth? or making your bed? And you can develop good habits to help you handle much more important tasks.

"HABIT IS HABIT, AND NOT TO BE FLUNG OUT OF THE WINDOW BY any MAN, BUT COAXED DOWNSTAIRS A STEP AT A TIME." — MARK TWAIN

Although your bad habit has formed a permanent pathway in your brain, you can program your brain to form a bigger permanent pathway through the constant repetition of a good behavior. Schedule a program of exercise at the time when you find you are most likely to watch too much television. Make a conscious effort to replace gossip with praise of people you know.

YOU cannot EXPECT TO MAKE ANY PERMANENT CHANGE IN YOUR LIFE WITHOUT GOD'S HELP.

Jesus illustrated this principle in Matt. 12:43-45: "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order.

"Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

6. *Think of your habit-changing campaign in positive terms.* Focusing on all the things you are having to give up only casts a negative light on anything you try to do. If you are trying to lose weight, picture yourself looking better in a swimming suit rather than dwelling on all the chocolate cake you're going to miss.

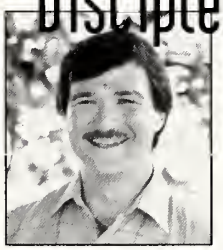
7. *Don't give up if you fail.* Remember those electrochemical pathways in your brain make it easy to go back to your old habit. As Peter Miller, coauthor of *Self Watching* says, "Quitting a habit is easy. Starting again is even easier." If you give in to your old habit, don't be tough on yourself. Consider it a learning experience and build on it.

Research has shown that the more a person has tried to give up smoking, the greater are his or her chances of success. Don't allow yourself to get discouraged. If the disciple Peter had let his failure in the courtyard at Jesus' trial discourage him, he would never have become a great leader in the early Christian church. "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again" (Prov. 24:16). If Jesus can forgive you, you surely ought to be able to forgive yourself.

God has promised that whatever Mean Mildreds you may have in your life he will help you to root them out. "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer" (Matt. 21:22). Why not ask him today to help you rid yourself of your harmful habits. ❑

Gary B. Swanson, a freelance writer from Silver Spring, Md., has had more than 800 articles, stories, and poems published in 130 Christian publications.

Discipleship



Clayton Blackstone

Finishing STRONG

FEW FOLKS recall the name of Laetitia Hubert even when mentioned in connection with the 1992 Winter Olympic Figure Skating Championship. Kristi Yamaguchi, Midori Ito, Nancy Kerrigan, and Tonya Harding curried the favor of the judges and the adulation of the crowd. But my vote goes to Laetitia for sheer blood and guts.

This young French skater earned my admiration and respect for completing her routine. She astounded everyone by a strong performance in the preliminaries. Her fifth-place finish netted her an unexpected spot in the final competition. The pundits ranked her thirty-fourth a year earlier. Now she faced the opportunity of a lifetime. She would skate for the gold.

Laetitia began her routine to the warm applause of a partisan French audience. She fell nearly a minute into the free-style event. The crowd groaned their disappointment. Since every skater, including those ranked higher, botched their early jumps, this miscue would not have proven disastrous. But Laetitia fell again. Then again. Her white outfit contrasted sharply with the huge black-and-blue bruise on her upper thigh.

The commentators mercifully cut to commercial as her routine concluded, avoiding the usual rehearsal of all that went wrong during the skater's performance. The camera shied away from showing her waiting for the scores with her coach at her side offering comforting words until the numbers flashed on the screen. Because of her disastrous performance, she dropped from fifth to twelfth in the final standings.

Laetitia Hubert earned my adulation because she finished. The first miscue must have produced disappointment. The second resignation. The third a sense of impending disaster. Still, she completed her routine. She recovered and went on when almost any one of us would have tucked tail between legs and run for cover. She concluded her program with head up and emotions, at least for the moment, in check. The lady deserved a medal.

Her gutsy finish contrasts sharply with that of Harry Hartman, a young pitcher for the old Brooklyn Dodgers. This promising athlete's day of glory arrived in 1918 when management called the young ball player up from the minors to pitch against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

His dream began to disintegrate when the first pitch rocketed into the outfield for a single. The next batter tripled. Rattled, he walked the third man with four straight balls. When he finally managed to throw a strike to the next hitter, it went for a single. Hartman had had enough. Even though the manager made no move to relieve him, Harry headed for the showers, dressed and walked out of the stadium to a naval recruiting office. The next day, the major leaguer for a day donned a military uniform, never to be heard from in professional baseball again. Today Harry Hartman holds the record for the shortest major league career on the books.

Based upon my purely unscientific method of observation, more Harrys than Laetitias populate our planet these days. More quit on their dreams because of one bad outing than pick themselves up and end with grace. More flitter from one thing to another than continue to reach for the gold even though it appears that all hope is lost.

Lots of people sense an irresistible urge toward Jesus. Somehow, they know that he holds the key to their emotional and spiritual survival. From all appearances, they accept his offer of a fresh start, a new beginning. But, like the Harry Hartmans of the world, they hit the showers long before the last batter stands at the plate.

We begin our spiritual pilgrimages with high hopes. But somewhere along the path, disappointment ambushes our good intentions and attacks our will to continue. Others walked the same path. Encountered similar disappointments. Struggled with the challenge to "keep on keeping on." So Scripture places its arm on our sagging shoulders and offers helpful counsel to those determined to finish life as a Laetitia rather than a Harry—a champion of the faith in one's own right.

Reaching for the gold

No one in the New Testament apart from Jesus finished life in such fine form as Paul. His writings provide us with an opportunity to learn from his example. In the end, the limitations of a prison cell restricted what he could accomplish. But, over the years, the importance of achievement faded as he reached for the one gold medal worth having.

"My ambitions have changed dramatically," he wrote. *"I'm now determined to become intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ, experience the power of his resurrection daily and participate in his sufferings so that I may be transformed into his likeness. I know that if I die as he died, I will be raised from the dead as well."*

Everybody wants a piece of our time, our loyalties, our money, and our energy. They grab for it as if possession was their exclusive right. Their loud and abrasive voices drown out the still small whisper beckoning us to march to a heavenly drumbeat.

The gold medal of Paul's dreams? Knowing Christ. It guided the purpose of his life. To him, nothing else mattered much.

We shake our heads in disbelief. How? What about work? Our families? Fun? Every illustration breaks down somewhere along the line, but perhaps one here will help.

Computers mystify me. I know enough to turn one on and coax it to perform certain functions. But explain it? Never! Some recent reading provided me with a limited understanding of what makes the beast inside the plastic case work. "In order for the equipment to function properly," the experts tell me, "an operating system must be installed. IBM® compatible machines require DOS® or OS/2®. A new Macintosh® calls for System 7®." But operating systems, in order to live up to their designs, require additional programs. Without the software, nothing works.

The goal of knowing Christ is the operating system upon which the software of life depends. The manner in which we approach work, family, and leisure hinges upon our grasp of the wonders of the person of Christ and the power of resurrection he makes available to us on a daily basis. Even difficult times occupy a crucial place in God's scheme of things.

"We should cultivate an ability to say no to activities for which we have no time or talent, and in which we have no interest or real concern. If we learn to say no to many things, then we will be able to say yes to things that matter most." (*Reader's Digest:* "Points to Ponder") Great counsel easier spoken than lived. But lived it must be if we want to finish well so badly we can taste it. Easy answers elude us. Nothing short of a ruthless dissecting of the demands on our time and energy works in the long haul.

And just as tough to take as the dissecting surgery—Paul's definition of what matters at the turning of the sod. According to him finishing well isn't the size of the bank account we leave for our children to hassle over. It isn't a litany of accomplishments. Or a detailed listing of all the rules we kept and laws we didn't break. Or even how good other people thought we were. In a nutshell, it's how well we knew Jesus.

Lots of people sense an irresistible urge toward Jesus. From all **appearances**, they accept his offer of a fresh start, a new beginning. But they hit the showers **long** before the end.

Always under construction

The apostle who finished strongly set his sights on knowing Christ, always recognizing that, this side of eternity, he never arrived. Some in the early church taught that once folks exited from the baptismal waters nothing could be added to their now perfect state. They wore the medal of perfection proudly around their necks in contrast to Paul grasping for the prize.

"I've not accomplished my ideal or achieved my purpose yet. I continue to press on to grasp what Jesus grasped me for. I'm far from thinking that I have arrived. I continue to concentrate on what lies ahead for me. I refuse to rest on past accomplishments or be immobilized by failure and disappointment. I'm doing my best to race towards the finish line to win the prize which God has set aside for me."

No one completely forgets the past—not even Paul. Moments earlier he had written about the events in his life which some might consider important. For the apostle, forgetting means resisting the temptation to allow the past to absorb our attention and impede our progress. None of the trophies on his mantle compared with what God prearranged for him. So, he fixed his gaze straight ahead instead of over his shoulder.

According to Paul, people who finish *strong* realize that the task of reflecting Christ in our character is never complete. They avoid the comfortable feelings of familiar surroundings. The glory days remain a future hope rather than a past memory.

Wanted—a great spiritual coach

The boys on Elliot's basketball team appeared ready to drop with exhaustion. Caught up in the game, they ran from one end of the court to the other, never slowing long enough to run a play. It always happens when a team plays "run and gun." They lose control of the tempo of the game. Fouls increase. Shots careen erratically off the backboard. Passes fly out of bounds.

Sometimes sport mirrors life.

continued on page 19

ADVENT WOMEN OF INFLUENCE CHRISTIAN

Dorothy Crouse
Dowling Park, Fla.

Editor's Note: Dorothy Crouse presented this article in verbal form at a WHFMS meeting held at the Village Church on the grounds of the Advent Christian Village in Dowling Park, Fla. She presented this in conjunction with the 1993 WHFMS Program kit theme, "Women of Influence."

REFLECT for a minute, if you will, on the women of influence in your lives. The pattern of family life that I observed in the small Wisconsin town where I grew up was that fathers went to work and mothers stayed home and took care of the family and the home. This was a tradition that had not changed for many years. As I recall, the stores, shops, and churches were directed by men. But when you looked into the classroom, it was a different story. There women held forth as teachers with general approval.

Prominent role in Advent Christian work

A look at campmeetings and some Advent Christian churches in the late1800s revealed a startling picture. Women were preaching; granted with a mixed reception, but nevertheless, they were given the opportunity. The Advent Christian denomination has its roots in the Millerite movement of 1831 to 1844. William Miller's renewed emphasis on the second coming of Christ was responsible for America's second advent awakening. In the early days of the movement, women played significant roles. Groups began slowly to splinter off from the movement and began to take shape as denominations. Abigail Mussey and Lucy Stoddard were pioneer women evangelists in the Millerite movement, later joining forces with the Advent Christian Association. Ellen White, also an active evangelist in the movement, later became the central figure of Seventh-day Adventism. Rebecca Smith served as the editor of the *Herald of Life* for the Life and Advent Union denomination.

Though important from the beginning, women did not escape the traditional resistance to their gender in public ministry. Abigail Mussey speaks clearly of this resistance:

"But I am a woman, a poor, illiterate female, and how can I go? Female preachers are but few, and they are persecuted and opposed by the clergy of the day, they will repeat the words of the apostle, that it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church, and that is sufficient for them to know that a woman has no call, and ought not to preach; and to be called the woman-preacher, when I don't know enough, and I am no preacher?"

Though important from the beginning, women did not escape the traditional resistance to their gender in public ministry.

In his *History of the Second Advent Message*, I.C. Wellcome says concerning Lucy Hersey Stoddard's first invitation to preach, "The people were so opposed to female speaking, the brother thought it would offend if the daughter should speak." These statements are typical.

The opposition came not only from the congregation; female preachers *themselves* had questions concerning whether it was proper for them to speak in public. Nevertheless, women continued to be active as preachers, pastors, evangelists, teachers, and missionaries, making invaluable contributions to the Lord's work.

My source for information about the early women preachers is the Spring 1986 issue of *Henceforth*. This journal is currently published twice each year by the Advent Christian General Conference and I have used an article by Colonel Craig Dunham. He is a life-long Advent Christian, has a BA in Theology from Berkshire Christian College, a Masters of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell, and a Doctorate of Ministry from San Francisco Theological Seminary. He is now a career chaplain in the U.S. Army. The title of his article is "Women Ministers?!" Punctuation following the title is very expressive—question mark, exclamation point. What's that sup-

posed to mean? We'll see.

He quotes scholars extensively and gives biographical sketches of a selected list of women. It is intended to be an objective study that highlights the contribution of women to the growth and development of the Advent Christian denomination.

Why did women emerge in Advent Christian work?

He does not offer any theories on why this emergence of women in the mid-19th and early 20th century had occurred. So let me share some of my ideas with you:

1. These women were devout Christians and had that listening ear tuned to the divine guidance they were seeking. They were part of a newly-formed group where interest and excitement was high; perhaps this made it easier for different and unusual activity to emerge.

2. The Advent Christian Association of Second Adventists which later became the Advent Christian denomination was formed with *no* central governing body; congregational government prevailed and this left church or regions free to make their own decisions.

3. Many of these women came from families of limited means. They had to be strong to survive and this strength was directed to the Lord's work.

4. There was general unrest in the country. New land opening up was a strong incentive to leave home and familiar surroundings and find new groups. Following the Civil War, many evangelists were attracted to the South to help people; this included *women as well as men.*

Who are some of the people Craig Dunham quotes? Let me mention just a few:

In an article titled, "These Women," George Dewing views women as playing a key role in the development of the Advent Christian denomination. He says concerning the establishment of the local church, "No doubt some churches were organized and sustained through their efforts.

My Pilgrimage

Linda Leavitt

Changes

OUR WORLD is in a constant state of change and transition. And as members of the current world population, that change affects our lives whether we like it or not. In my own life, over the past several years, I have also found considerable change. Two years ago, at age forty-two, I quit my job and went back to school full-time. A little over a year ago we moved from a small town pastorate, to a major city, in hopes of starting a new church work. This past year, the last one of our children also left the nest. Not only is the world changing around me, but "my world" seems to be changing just as fast!

Most of the changes that we encounter day to day are not so monumental, but with so many changes going on around us, even the smallest of changes can be difficult for us to adjust to. Someone has said, "only a wet baby likes change!" (Even then there's a whole lot of fussing that usually accompanies that.) And quite often there is little we can do to control the circumstances and changes that confront us. But the problem is not so much the change, or the difficulties that accompany it. It's the way we handle it. We have the choice of moving "with grace" through these transitions, or we can fight against the tide.

Some of the changes that I've recently faced have been because of personal choices that I've made. Quitting my job and going back to school full-time was a difficult choice and brought with it many changes I had not anticipated. Some of these were exciting and stimulating, but many brought a great deal of stress. This major change also brought about many other minor changes.

Other change has been brought about by choices other members of my family have made, like relocation to a new ministry. And then there is the change that comes through the natural order of events, like children growing up and leaving home to start changes of their own. When life is so full of all these new mountains to climb, how do we hang on to any sense of security and peace? For those of us who believe in Jesus Christ, we have an unchanging rock on which to fix ourselves. All else may change around us, but Scripture tells us that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Perhaps we struggle with the thinking that all change is negative. It is not! I may not like all the changes going on in my life, but I believe these changes have come as a result of positive choices I have made for the future. And the most important act of anyone's life is the choice to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The change that comes about through this choice is not only positive, it's essential! It is a change we hope and pray all will make before it is too late!

Maybe we're not so different from that "wet-baby" who struggles and cries through the process of change, fighting against the very thing he desires and needs. We don't always understand either that once the process is finished, the change is for our best.

Church buildings were erected in some places almost entirely by their active initiative." The Helpers Union is mentioned as having played a primary role in establishing Mendota College. His opinion is well summed up in these words, "The women seldom register a failure."

Three prominent women

In 1966, Gordon O. Reed published an article entitled, "Women in the Pulpit." It was inspired by the death of three prominent Advent Christian women ministers. He again attributes 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to a local situation in the first century. Reed points to the record: "Some Advent Christians have opposed women preachers. Women as well as men have joined in questioning this rule. But our church has not forbidden it. Through the years, women have served in distinguished ways as evangelists and pastors." And he focuses on three:

1. Abigail Messer Mussey (1811-1891): Abigail Mussey was born in New London, Connecticut in 1811. She was married to Levi Mussey in January of 1832. Abigail was inclined toward Christianity; her husband was not. When Levi's brother returned home after his conversion, he witnessed to Levi and Abigail. Abigail says concerning this episode, "This aroused feelings of opposition in my husband, and, to my sorrow, I saw if I ever got religion, I must wade through a flood of opposition." Her husband forbade her on several occasions to associate with religious people. The struggle was long, but by 1843, both Abigail and Levi had accepted the Lord and were confirmed Millerites.

From 1842 to 1857, conflict and sorrow filled Abigail's life. She experienced the disappointment of Miller's mistaken prediction of the Lord's return in 1844. In 1856 her husband died, and in 1857 her eldest son. During these difficult years she began to have visions of preaching the Gospel:

"I sometimes dreamed of standing in the pulpit and preaching the Gospel to a dying world. I would always awake happy and had good meetings after such dreams, which were a good omen to me... I often thought if I were a man, I should love to preach Jesus."

These dreams provided a glimmer of hope in spite of the tragedies she experienced.

In the years following her husband's death, she remained active in the church and in campmeetings, frequently testifying to the things of Christ. Then she was invited to speak at Carlisle, Massachusetts, and shortly after traveled to Nova Scotia. She also preached at Wilbraham Campground; Haverhill, and Carlisle in Massachusetts; and Comia, Eliot, Portsmouth, New Castle, Biddeford, and Kennebunkport in Maine.

> Have we lost the fervor and momentum gained in those early years? I think not!

In spite of tragedy, sorrow, and inner conflicts concerning a woman preaching and the external prejudice against it, Mussey became a respected Advent Christian preacher.

2. Lucy Hersey Stoddard (1823-?): Lucy Hersey was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1823. She was converted in early childhood and at the age of eighteen received a call to the ministry. In 1842, she embraced the Millerite teaching, resigned from her job as a public school teacher, and became an associate evangelist with Sarah J. Paine.

She made a trip to Schenectady, New York, with her father to visit some friends. Her father was asked to speak, but he could say nothing. Thus Miss Hersey was introduced as follows:

"Brother Hersey has a daughter here who talks some in conference meetings when at home in New England, and if there is no objection raised by anyone present, we would like to hear from her."

No objections were stated, so she preached. As a result, she remained in Schenectady for several meetings. The crowds grew so large, they had to obtain the courthouse, and even then there was standing room only. In addition, she gained notoriety in the newspapers, which published her sermons in the morning editions. She remained in central New York State for six months, "preaching every evening and three times on the Lord's day."

Shortly after her experiences in New York, she married J.C. Stoddard. "They continued in a team ministry. The late Elder Jonas Wendell, and several ministers who are now proclaiming the Gospel, state that their conversion to the truth, was through her preaching." As one of the pioneer preachers of Millerism and later of the Advent Christian denomination, she made a significant impact upon thousands of people.

3. Miriam McKinstry (1845-1930): Miriam McKinstry is the most noted Advent Christian woman preacher. She was born Miriam Alexander in Granby, Quebec, in 1845. In 1865, she was married to Levi C. McKinstry in Bolton, Canada. They began a traveling ministry on February 16, 1866.

She was encouraged by her husband to begin preaching and even though she *felt* called, she experienced difficulty in responding to the possibility of public ministry:

"I cannot say anything if I try. I have tried to speak in social meetings, but never could say anything. I *should* believe God wanted me to do this, but I am so small, so weak, how can I go forward?"

Finally in 1866 in Hopkins Mills, Connecticut, she delivered her first sermon. From this time on, the McKinstrys participated in a team evangelistic ministry. They also co-pastored several churches in their later ministry. They continued as a team until the death of Levi on September 2, 1897.

After her husband's death, Miriam continued her ministry as a prophetic lecturer. She lectured in 27 states, 5 Canadian provinces, and over 200 cities and towns. C.O. Farnham said of her ministry, "Her ability as a pastor and executive was of a very high order and her lecturers and sermons were so convincingly presented wherever she went, that she justly earned the title as the most wonderful woman lecturer in the country."

McKinstry died in February 1930 at the age of 85. The Sunday following her death she had been scheduled to speak. Linden J. Carter writes, "It is probably not too much to say that no one among us has reached as many people as this gifted lecturer since the days of William Miller and Joshua V. Himes." Since her death no woman of her stature has risen in the Advent Christian denomination.

There are others whose names are mentioned: Mary D. Wellcome, probably the grandmother of Mary Wellcome Chandler; Mrs. M.X. Mansfield who traveled with her husband; Harriet Hastings who spent much of her effort in postwar South; Rebecca Smith, a preacher as well as editor, and Sarah Paine Taylor who founded Woman's Home & Foreign Mission Society in 1897. Also, Maude Chadsey, Susie Davis, Bertha Cassidy, Roberta Gerald, Eunice Knox, Rena Brown, Alice Bennett, Doris Stone, and Pearl Pender.

What of today? Have we lost the fervor and momentum gained in those early years? I think not! When we examine current records we find twelve women listed as ordained Advent Christian ministers. Four reside here at the Village: Mary Brown, Eunice Greene, Beulah Purkiser, and Laura Putnam. There are twenty-seven licensed ministers, with four at the Village: Ina Hart, Rosemary Humbles, Alice Osborne, and Luree Wotton. This is a good record when we remember that there are denominations and churches still tearing themselves apart over this issue. ❑

With a bachelor's degree in home economics education, four years of high school teaching, and a master's degree in textiles from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Dorothy arrived at Aurora College in 1940 ready to teach home economics and manage the food service. After marrying Dr. Moses Crouse, she moved through a variety of careers at the college, retiring in 1978 from career planning and placement as associate dean of students. Dorothy writes, "In retirement I can enjoy all the creative pursuits I never could find time for during those busy years of work. Following Moses' death in 1985, I moved to the Advent Christian Village in 1988 and have just celebrated five fulfilling and rewarding years here."

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
ABIDE
SEEK
KNOW

March

1 Pray that God will guide Advent Christian conference leaders from the Philippines, Malaysia, Japan, India, New Zealand, and the United States as they meet together for the **Asian Strategy Conference** next month.

2 Praise God for the work that two Advent Christian congregations are doing to reach people with the message of God's love in the Central American nation of **Honduras**.

3 Pray for students at the **School of Evangelism in India** as they prepare for church planting and pastoral ministry.

4 Praise God for the ministry of **Ken Lawrence, Bill Greisner Jr.**, and **Tim Lawrence** as they worked with Advent Christian missions in India during January on a short-term project.

5 Pray that God will give strength and guidance to **Beryl Joy Hollis, Barbara White**, and **Marion Damon** as they continue to preach the gospel and train leaders in India.

6 Praise God that hundreds of lives were touched for Jesus Christ by Advent Christian churches, leaders, and missionaries in **India**.

7 Pray that God will guide Advent Christian national missionaries in Malaysia—**Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam, James and Mercy Devadasson**, and **Ruth Devairakkam**—as they proclaim the gospel in this officially Islamic nation.

8 Pray that Christians throughout **Malaysia** will experience God's protection from persecution in a nation where it is "illegal" to speak to a Muslim about Christ.

9 Praise God that he's called young men and women to study for ministry at **Oro Bible College** in the Philippines.

10 Pray for **Harry and Etta Soucy** as they continue to adjust to their new responsibilities in the Philippines.

11 Praise God for the effective ministry that Advent Christian churches and leaders in the **Philippines** have in proclaiming the good news of Christ's love.

12 Pray for Philippine missionaries **David Vignali** and **Margaret Helms** as they work to share the gospel.

13 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they continue working toward planting an Advent Christian congrega-

tion in West Kobe, Japan.

14 Praise God for the opportunities **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** have to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions in local churches while on deputation.

15 Pray for **Ruth Soucier** as she continues to communicate God's love to Japanese students in her English classes.

16 Begin to praise God for the **resurrection of Jesus Christ** which we will celebrate on the first Sunday of April.

17 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they communicate the love of Jesus Christ in the inner-city of Memphis, Tennessee.

18 Pray that Advent Christian congregations located in Memphis, Tenn.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Chicago, and other **urban areas** will be bold as they meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in their communities.

19 Pray that the **1994 Penny Crusade** will build a strong missions awareness among Advent Christians throughout Canada and the United States.

20 Praise God for the opportunities that Gordon-Conwell Seminary professors **David A. Dean** and **Robert Fillinger** have had to spend time with students and faculty at Tecate Bible Institute in Mexico.

21 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they provide leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in the El Florido district of Tijuana, Mexico.

22 As students at **Tecate Bible Institute** prepare for graduation, pray that God will guide them into ministries where they will effectively touch lives for Christ in Mexico.

23 Pray for Christians in **Nigeria** as they face potential conflict with Muslims and others opposed to the spread of the gospel.

24 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Nigeria** will be effective in reaching people with the good news of Christ's love.

25 Pray that Christians in **Liberia** will have a strong influence on their country as the nation seeks to rebuild after their civil war.

26 Pray for Pastor **Ben Cleon** as he provides leadership for Advent Christian churches and leaders in Liberia.

27 Praise God that through his **mercy and grace**, we can discover reconciliation and hope through Jesus Christ.

28 As we celebrate **Palm Sunday**, pray that pastors and missionaries will effectively proclaim the good news of Christ's sacrifice for us.

29 Pray for World Missions director **Harold Patterson** as he seeks God's leading for the future work of Advent Christian missions.

30 This Sunday, we will celebrate the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ. Praise God for how he has demonstrated his love, justice, and mercy to us.

31 Praise God that our salvation is based not on anything we do to try to please him but totally on God's grace as expressed through **Jesus Christ**.

TOLERANCE

FROM PAGE 3

different from us. Our Lord himself demonstrated this in his work with people; and the big reason people responded to his teachings about discipleship was the Master's ability to speak the truth in love. Jesus never said we should love only those who are like us or who share all of our beliefs. As we live and work, we'll come into contact with people from a variety of diverse backgrounds. The best way for them to hear about God's love for them is for Christians to demonstrate Christ's unconditional love toward them.

The only road to God

While legal and social tolerance have distinctively Christian roots, there's a third type of tolerance that Christians must say no to. Against the idea of intellectual tolerance—the belief that all ideas and religions are of equal value—Christians must hold firm to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not simply a great religious teacher or one of many ways to find God, he is the *only* source of forgiveness and eternal life. In the face of intellectual and religious pluralism, Christians are to declare the lordship of Jesus over all the world and all of life. While we're willing to dialogue with people from other religions, our message is that Jesus, in Eugene Peterson's paraphrase is, "the Road, the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me" (John 14:6; The Message).

Practicing authentic Christian tolerance means learning, in the apostle Paul's words, how to "speak the truth in love." Truth without love becomes harsh legalism. Love without truth becomes mushy sentimentality. Unfortunately, too many Christians continue to speak the truth without love and too many secularists talk about love without any sense of virtue or moral value. Christian tolerance rejects both of those extremes and calls us to practice love both for the truth of God's Word and for the people from all different backgrounds we come into contact with. ❑

THE HOME

FROM PAGE 9

nicate that the child is lovable and worthwhile in your eyes no matter what they do.

No parent is perfect. There will be times when you will lash out in anger. You will say things that wound. But if you will demonstrate honor and encouragement on a consistent basis, you will build a sense of value into your children that will overshadow your mistakes. Remember, the tone of the home is essentially your responsibility. ❑

Finishing Strong

FROM PAGE 13

Caught up in its tempo, our discipline grows lax. Our bodily desires dictate our decisions. The sensitive side of our consciences dull with poor choices. Paul addresses this reality with another truth designed to help us finish strong: everyone needs a coach to urge them on to the gold.

We need someone to remind us of how things really are. Someone to interpret our lives through objective eyes not our own.

As the skaters exited from the ice, they found themselves in the arms of coaches dedicated to their success. These people encouraged. Interpreted. Reassured. But during practice, they assumed another roll by demanding more and more of the athlete. Correcting. Teaching. Reminding of the goal of gold.

Paul coached beloved children. Set himself up as a worthy example. Reminded them of the realities of eternal God. Reassured them of his love. They did him proud—and he told them so!

Everyone needs a Paul. A loving but tough spiritual coach who loves us enough to urge us on towards eternal gold when we feel like calling it quits. Someone willing to listen. Someone who refuses to allow us to play rationalizing games. Someone with our best interests at heart. Someone we can trust enough to give permission to pose the tough questions we seldom dare ask ourselves.

Everyone needs a Paul. A loving but tough spiritual **coach** who loves us enough to urge us on towards eternal gold when **we** feel like calling it quits.

Never far from the books

A final clue to finishing strong comes as Paul writes his last good-by to Timothy, his son in the faith. He knew all along that things might get tough, but by the time he penned his second letter to his son in the faith, he faced certain death.

I feel as though the last drops of my life are being poured out for God. It's time to cast anchor and set sail for eternal shores. I've done my best. I've completed the race. I've held firmly to the faith God called me to. In the future, the Lord, who is the only righteous judge, will reward me with the crown of righteousness. Along with me, all who have longed for his appearing will be crowned.

Hard to imagine—coming to the end of life with no regrets. Looking back over thirty years of ministry without sighing a single "If only. . ." He played the entire game without fouling out. Served faithfully. Finished strong. The clue of how surfaces verses later. *"Timothy, do your best to come and see me soon. And when you do, please bring. . . the scrolls, especially the parchments."*

The man expected to die anytime. He felt as thought the end had already begun. Still, he begged his friend to bring reading material, especially his well-worn parchments of the sacred writings. He wanted to learn until the moment of his death.

We read sparingly these days. "Too busy," we assert. The truth, according to Richard Cohen: "The penchant to praise and to build self-esteem has produced an academic culture that values the little smile sticker on a test paper more than knowledge itself. It's not what you know that counts, it's how you feel about it."

Reading molds our thinking. According to Katie Wiebe, "Unless (through books) we maintain constant companionship with Christians who direct our thinking Christianly, we easily fall prey to the spirit of our times."

The disciple who finishes strong views life as an unending process of learning. Seeks a coach to enhance the training process. Understands that one's character is always under construction. Realizes that the software of life cannot run without the operating system of knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

Harry Hartman walked to the edge of his dream before abandoning it because he got shelled his first time out. Laetitia Hubert fell three times but finished as she planned. That's how I want to end. Certainly a bit bruised. Probably with a "what if" or two. But with head up and arms towards heaven—straight into the arms of Jesus, my coach.

I can't imagine a better ending! ❑

Cal Thomas

FROM PAGE 8

eracy. The Gallup—USA Today Poll found only 11 percent of Americans read their Bibles daily. The problem isn't in the world it's in the church. People who are ignorant about the Word of God are going to be disobedient to the will of God and blind to the will of God. We need to reform, transform, and inform the Church of Jesus Christ, because the power is going to come, not through government but through God's Spirit. And the reason the church has no power is because we have a lot of ignorant, compromising, undisciplined, undiscipled people who claim to follow Jesus Christ. If we get the church's act together then we'll be able to speak with real power to the state, but not before. They don't respect us. Why should they? ❑

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—*NASA photo*

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Was Dan Quayle Right?

IF DAN Quayle's comments about Murphy Brown lit the fuse, the following words from sociologist Charles Murray have touched off the explosion. "The ethical underpinning. . . is this: Bringing a child into the world is the most important thing that most human beings ever do. Bringing a child into the world when one is not emotionally or financially prepared to be a parent is wrong. The child deserves society's support. The parent does not."

The result? A mushrooming debate about whether or not welfare programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) encourage behavior destructive to individuals and harmful to society. Through his *Wall Street Journal* article from which the above quotation comes, Mr. Murray has seized the initiative in defining the issues that will shape any proposed welfare reform. President Clinton has already said that he agrees with Mr. Murray's diagnosis and a growing amount of scientific evidence strongly supports his conclusions.

> The more we pursue policies that foster and encourage illegitimacy, the greater chance we'll lose the political liberties we take for granted.

The most important social problem

"Illegitimacy is the single most important social problem of our time—more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare or homelessness because it drives everything else," according to Mr. Murray. And in his view, the problem is about to get much worse. In 1991, 1.2 million children were born to unmarried mothers, almost 30% of all live births. As that percentage grows, our society will continue to deteriorate and "the values of unsocialized male adolescents. . . physical violence, immediate gratification, and predatory sex" will become our norms.

Mr. Murray contends that "a society with broad legal freedoms depends crucially on strong nongovernmental institutions to temper and restrain behavior. Of these, marriage is paramount. Either we reverse the current trends in illegitimacy. . . or America must, willy-nilly, become an unrecognizably authoritarian, socially segregated, centralized state." In blunt terms, the more we pursue policies that foster and encourage illegitimacy, the greater chance we'll lose the political liberties we take for granted.

The package of proposals advocated by Mr. Murray includes ending AFDC and other welfare programs that in his view subsidize and encourage illegitimacy, encouraging adoption, lavish spending on orphanages for children who for one reason or another are not adopted, revising the tax code so that it favors marriage and children, and making "marriage once again the sole legal institution through which parental rights and responsibilities are defined and exercised." In Mr. Murray's words, these policies "were the uncontroversial law of the land as recently as John Kennedy's presidency."

Churches have a role to play

Whatever you think of Mr. Murray's solutions, (Although I think he's on the right track, I'm not sure ending AFDC will do all he claims it will.) it's hard to argue with his diagnosis. Illegitimacy is the driving force behind many social problems and our society should take steps to discourage, not encourage, childbearing outside of marriage.

But the government can't do everything. It's time for churches to play a big role through communicating what the Scriptures teach about the importance of marriage and through ministries that enable couples to see marriage as not simply an elaborate ceremony but a life-long relationship. As syndicated columnist Michael McManus says, churches must become "marriage-savers—

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Healthy Churches Make DISCIPLES

A CONVERSATION WITH DANN SPADER

Dann Spader's passion is disciple-making—helping people no matter where they are in life to grow toward Jesus Christ. "A Great Commission church," in Rev. Spader's words, "ministers to all individuals at their level of spiritual interest—with a balance of winning, building, and equipping priorities." Advent Christian Witness *editor Bob Mayer sat down with Dann Spader during the General Conference triennial convention last summer and asked him several questions about disciple-making and its importance in local churches.*

Dann, at the Pastors' Conference, you talked a lot about healthy local churches. What do you mean by that term?

When I think of healthy congregations, I focus on three issues. First, a clearly defined mission. Second, a clearly defined product. Third, understanding the process involved in becoming and staying healthy. I'm convinced that health reflects progression. Children are healthy, and yet not mature. My wife and I have a healthy two-year-old. Yet she's not as mature as my nine-year-old because maturity is a sign of progression.

Churches go through stages of maturity that I think parallel the different stages of maturity we see in the life of Christ. The first stage is a foundational maturity where we get healthy in terms of prayer, understanding the Scriptures, grasping who God is and what he has done for us, and healthy relationships.

That leads to the second stage—healthy churches have people who

want more in terms of ministry to people and allegiance to the cause of Christ. And in the third stage—the healthy church becomes mature in terms of outreach. We begin to mobilize in terms of reaching people in our community with the life-changing message of Jesus.

The fourth stage of health comes when we begin to multiply that impact either in planting new churches or multiplying leadership. You see, health on one hand is progression—progressing forward as a congregation. It's normal for a child to grow and it's normal for churches to grow in spiritual depth and in numbers.

> I'm convinced that health reflects progression. Children are healthy, and yet not mature.

But I also think health can be measured in terms of end product. How do we define that end product? I think by answering this question—"Are we regularly seeing people coming to Christ, being grounded in their faith, and being equipped to go back and reach their peers?" If that's happening, then a local church is healthy because healthy congregations reach people for Christ, ground them in Christian maturity, and equip them to reach their peers for Christ.

It's important to see that the issue is not small churches versus large churches. It's effectiveness in ministry. A church can be large and busy, but not effective. Because being effective involves winning people to Christ, grounding them in their Christian faith, and equipping them to reach their peers.

So being healthy doesn't mean being perfect in your view. Instead it means being in process.

Absolutely. Being in process and seeing the right things happen, not just doing things right.

Research has shown that many churches are not healthy. Why do so many churches seem to struggle in our day and time?

I think there are a couple of big reasons for that. Much of the research being done indicates that eighty-five percent of congregations in North America are either stagnant or declining in comparison to the population growth here. And of the fifteen percent of congregations that are growing, most of those are growing primarily by people transferring their membership. So most of our local congregations, no matter what their size, are not healthy.

I'm convinced that the primary reason is because our priorities are out of balance. We do not reflect a "Great Commission balance" of winning, building, and equipping priorities. That's true both in our personal lives as believers and in our corporate lives as congregations. We've put all our energies into believers interacting with other believers. I don't see that in the life of Christ, in the Great Commission, or in the book of Acts. In fact, when believers in Jerusalem failed to interact with non-Christians in the world around them and communicate the gospel, God scattered them through persecution. The church has a tendency to become cloistered and when that happens, God scatters us.

> Most of our local congregations, no matter what their size, are not healthy.

Are you saying that part of God's purpose involves deliberately scattering his people into society?

God does that only when we disobey his command of going and making disciples. Healthy churches make disciples by equipping their people to reach their peers for Christ in the course of their daily living. That's normal. But we've reverted back to cloistering and that's unhealthy.

You shared with the pastors that Jesus had a specific strategy for reaching men and women with the message of the gospel. What are the key components of that strategy?

I see Jesus' strategy summed up in the Great Commission. I've spent ten years studying Jesus' strategy in my work with young people and I'm passionate in my belief that Jesus not only gave us the message, but the method for creating a movement of multiplying disciples.

One of the key components of that strategy comes from Christ's life—he reflected a balance of winning, building, and equipping priorities. In other words, he kept a balance in his personal life and ministry between winning the lost, building his followers, and equipping those few who wanted more. You see times when Jesus would be among large groups of lost people for days on end. But there were times when he would run from the crowds and tell people not to tell others because the crowds had become too big and he needed to spend some days alone. Look at the sixth and seventh chapters of Mark's gospel. Jesus and his disciples would deliberately spend a few days alone. Why? Because he wanted to keep that balance of win-

ning the lost, building the disciples, and equipping the few to ultimately train the masses.

Also, as you look at Jesus' life, you discover that he went through stages of creating a movement. The first stage was foundational—investing time with a few people. In the second stage, he worked more intensely with those few and began to mobilize them for outreach. In the third and fourth stages, the disciples did the outreach and began multiplying its impact.

You also spoke about the growing secularization of our society. What do you mean by that and why is it important for Christians to understand it?

Francis Schaeffer used terms that I really like in describing this. He talks about two kinds of non-Christians—the "religious secular" and the "secular secular." Religious-secular folks are those who have never trusted Christ but who have a church background. They may be involved in a theologically liberal church. They may go to church simply because it's an appropriate thing to do. They've never crossed the line in terms of trusting Christ. They're religious but not fully Christian in the biblical sense.

Historically, churches in the United States have done a good job in reaching the religious-secular person. But increasingly, our culture is becoming secular-secular. These folks have never attended church and know nothing about the Christian faith. George Barna in some of his latest research said that approximately sixty percent of sixty-year-olds, fifty percent of fifty-year-olds, forty-percent of forty-year-olds, thirty percent of thirty-year-olds, and twenty percent of twenty-year-olds go to church. It's easy to see that our culture is rapidly becoming secularized and is producing secular-secular people who never go to church and have no idea who God is.

My nine-year-old daughter has a friend who didn't even know who Jesus is or that he even existed. The only time she had ever heard his name was as a swear word. In the area where I live, the average age is thirty-five and seventy percent of our neighborhood never goes to church. We are becoming a secular-secular culture and because of that, churches have to learn how to reach the secular-secular person.

We've always been good at reaching religious-secular people. Now we have to address how we're going to target and reach secular-secular people.

> Are we regularly seeing people coming to Christ, being grounded in their faith, and being equipped to reach their peers?

And that's where Jesus' strategy comes in.

Exactly. That's where the strategy that Jesus employed is critical. We need to understand that strategy and begin to implement it in our churches. And we need to meet people right where they are.

Think about this. One of the leading evangelical seminaries in this country just moved their pastoral studies major into their missions department! Why? Because the United States is no longer a Christian society and baby-busters, those in their teens and twenties, are the first generation in our history who don't even have a memory of Christianity.

You grew up in a family of sixteen children. How did that lead to what you're attempting to accomplish in discipiemaking through SonLife?

I grew up in South Dakota in a staunch German-Catholic home and was raised by wonderful parents. They taught me the old-fashioned German work ethic—the importance and value of work and family. My approach to life was practical.

I came to Christ at age twenty and went to college and seminary. But that practical side stuck with me as I looked at the Scriptures. About eighteen months after I came to Christ, I was working with a youth group and struggling to understand what ministry was all about. I heard a professor make this statement: "There's a good chance that some of Christ's initial twelve disciples were teenagers." In my "practical" mindset, I asked, "If that's true, then how did Jesus grow his youth group?" I began to study how Jesus created a movement using young people. That led me to ten years of studying Christ's strategy of creating a movement of multiplying disciples.

We began to implement that in youth ministry and now we're attempting to apply that strategy to the whole of local church ministry. It's a philosophy of ministry. SonLife has been labeled in the past as mainly a youth movement. It's not. Our mission is to restore the Great Commission—our Lord's mandate to us to go and make disciples —to the heart of the church. Our strategy is to work

with leaders who are teachable and eager to learn that strategy for ministry.

Let me ask two more questions. As you think of your own life, are there a couple of people who have had a profound influence on you?

That's not hard. Dr. George Sweeting, the president of Moody Bible Institute, demonstrated to me one of the important things we stress in our training—creating a loving, caring church; developing a loving, caring ministry. It's critical that we not only experience God's love but that we learn how to express God's love in our daily lives. Dr. Sweeting taught that by the example of his life.

Dr. Bill Bright from Campus Crusade for Christ is a man of great vision who is passionate about the Great Commission. His vision has influenced me. Two other men I need to mention are authors: Carl Wilson and A.B. Bruce. These men have focused on discovering how Jesus made disciples and studying their work has impacted my vision for ministry.

And right after I came to Christ, there was a young man who discipled me. He spent time with me for almost two years making sure that I was grounded in my Christian faith. Nobody will ever hear much about him but he made sure that I was grounded in the basics.

We're entering into a time of partnership between SonLife and the Advent Christian Church with the vision of recapturing a Great Commission passion within our denomination. How do you see that partnership working out?

There are five denominations working with us as we launch this "healthy church" training. They've committed to working in partnership with us to train pastors, develop model churches, and then equip trainers within those denominations to multiply that training in local churches. The Advent Christian Church is one of those five denominations. Our partnership began when David Ross and Brent Carpenter began to interact with us about disciplemaking.

Our partnership will consist of SonLife offering training for pastors and local churches in areas of the country where there are Advent Christian congregations and ultimately developing trainers within the Advent Christian Church who can develop model ministries. These trainers would implement the strategy in their congregations and model that strategy in other churches. That's the core of what we do. We'll also work with the denomination to develop a long-term vision statement for the developing of those model ministries. ❑

The Christian Life is Supposed to be Simple

PAUL SAID it well when he wrote, "I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Cor 11:3, NASB). We face the very real temptation of transforming devotion to Christ and ministry for Christ into a complex, difficult task. This danger is not only internal, it is a target of spiritual warfare.

God's intention was that following Christ and living in devotion to Him be simple and straightforward. Our walk with Christ should be as simple as our belief in Him. "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col 2:6, NASB). The gospel that brings salvation is good news. That good news is not designed to turn sour after the moment of new birth.

All too often, our propensity to make everything complex invades the realm of our faith and clouds the beauty of God's gift of new life in Christ. If one is to be a "spiritual" Christian we often sound as if there are a multitude of things he or she must do. Follow these rules! Read these books! Go to Bible college or seminary! Learn Greek! Make sure your Bible has gold edges, red letters, and plenty of personal markings to show where you have been reading!

God's intent is that the Christian life be simple. It is to be characterized by the purity of devotion to our Savior. There is one catch. Although simple, the Christian life is not easy. ❑

From Growing a Healthy Church *by Dann Spader and Gary Mayes. Copyright ©1991 by Moody Press and used by permission.*

RETHINK IT! If It Doesn't Work. . .

Muriel Larson
Greenville, S.C.

ONE DAY I was talking to the superintendent of a Sunday school. "Do any particular problems trouble you in your position?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered. "It really bothers me that most of the teachers don't show up at the monthly meetings I hold for them."

"Well," I exclaimed, suddenly inspired, "why don't you cram everything you have to say to them into one ten-minute meeting before or after a church service?"

"I never thought of that," Daniel said slowly, as if a light had dawned. "But you may have something there!"

"You know, times have changed. In these days people have so many interesting things to do. They have malls to visit, TV shows they want to see. And many women as well as men work. This is the 'run-to-and-fro' generation, and I'm afraid many of us Christians are still doing things as they did in the horse-and-buggy days!"

"You may have something there," Daniel agreed. "And I guess it would be better to be able to talk to most of the teachers for ten minutes, than to talk for an hour to just two of them! I think I'll try that."

Life in the fast lane

As I thought afterwards about that conversation, I felt it applied to much of what goes on in our churches today. We're in a rut; and while a number of older devout Christians may be content to do things the way they were done forty years ago, I'm afraid it doesn't fit today's fast-lane lifestyle!

I'm not saying it's right for teachers to skip meetings concerning the Lord's work. What I'm saying is, let's face the facts and seek God's guidance for methods and strategies that will work in today's world. Let's get to the point and get it over with! I'll be honest: I've been to meetings that have almost put me to sleep! That's probably why many teachers prefer to stay home and watch the Cosby show or whatever.

While a number of older devout Christians may be content to do things the way they were done forty years ago, I'm afraid it doesn't fit today's fast-lane lifestyle!

I write for many publications and I've grown older while I've been doing it. But unless I'm alert and adapt to the markets today, all I'll get is rejection slips! One youth publication editor puts it succinctly: "You've got to grab teens by their izodes!" If what I write is boring, I won't get past the editor.

Tips for effective meetings

So how can we hold bright brief meetings and still get our points across?

1. Start immediately at the time scheduled, perhaps right after a regular meeting of the church; and let the teachers know that you will be brief.

2. Write an outline of what you plan to say. Have it typed up and photocopied, along with any tips for good teaching and responsible behavior. (By responsible I mean such things as the teacher letting you or the assistant teacher of a class know as soon as possible if he/she can't make it on Sunday.) Tell your teachers that you'd appreciate their reading this information when they study their lesson.

3. Stick closely to the outline—and keep an eye on the time.

4. Perhaps you might have such a meeting just every other month; and

the months that you don't meet, you could distribute a photocopied sheet listing anything you want to communicate to the teachers for that month.

5. Be appreciative, cheerful, and enthusiastic—that's ACE for short!

How do we resist?

What else might need rethinking in Sunday school? How about rigidity? Sometimes we get so hung up on the importance of keeping strictly to age groups that we can lose members or fail to attract new ones. Some Sunday schools, for instance, have adult classes according to decades. Now what woman is going to admit that she has just turned forty or fifty? For those who don't look their age, it might be downright embarrassing!

Among the children, I have seen where brothers, sisters, or visitors were arbitrarily divided according to age, regardless of how they felt about it. Personally I think that if a child brings to Sunday school a friend or a cousin, it might be wise to skip the system and allow the visitor to go into the same class as the person who brought him, if the ages are anywhere near the same.

Another thing we might rethink is the way we choose our teachers and Sunday school superintendents. In one church I saw a quiet school teacher installed as leader of the children's Sunday school assembly. On Sunday mornings she stood before the children and softly and blandly announced a hymn number. Then she would proceed to sing a very soft and unenthusiastic *solo*.

The superintendent had thought that because this lady was a school teacher, she would make a natural choice to lead the children's opening assembly. But personally I think that the way a person inter-relates with children in a vibrant way is more important than higher education or a person's profession.

Most of us can tell the difference between an enthusiastic person and one who isn't. And children must have enthusiastic leadership! I had a friend who was in charge of the junior church at her church. Bea Fishter had never been to college, but she was terrific with children. When rheumatoid arthritis crippled her, the pastor's wife urged her to continue with the work.

"When you're telling about Zaccaeus," Bea exclaimed, "you have to be able to act like you're climbing a tree!" No doubt that's why my friend was so effective in all her work with children. She did continue in her leadership position, training and giving many young people and adults the opportunity to learn how to serve the Lord as storytellers, song leaders, pianists—and tree climbers!

How do we teach?

Teachers, as well as superintendents, may want to rethink the way they've been doing things in order to improve attention, attendance, and participation. Do your class members listen to what you say—or do they seem bored? (When children are bored, either they cut up or they act uninterested.)

Has your attendance been steady or is it sporadic? How about class participation? Do you have some means during your teaching time to provoke interaction, response?

I'll never forget how I learned that a good teacher isn't supposed to just lecture! One of my classes at the Bible institute I attended was on teaching and my pastor taught it. Toward the end of the course each of us was to bring a short lesson. I chose Romans 12:12-2 to speak on and launched into a lecture on it.

I didn't get far into my lecture before my teacher stopped me. He brought to my attention something I should have known from having sat in his Sunday school class at our church. "The best way to teach, Muriel," he said, "is to draw out your students to participate with well-placed questions. They learn more that way, and it keeps them interested."

Before I had taken that course I had taught several Sunday school classes for various age groups. Although I felt hurt by my teacher's criticism and seeming lack of appreciation for my fine delivery and spiritual insight, it caused me to rethink the way I had taught in the past. And I became a better teacher from then on. I have found also that I have carried this approach into my child evangelism work, causing the children to respond with laughter, interest, and enthusiasm.

Making a class interesting can help improve attendance, and in so doing may benefit the families of your students and the church. Often children have a strong influence on their parents. If the children want to go to Sunday school, the parents might be less likely to drop out of church themselves.

I write for many publications and I've grown older while I've been doing it. But unless I'm alert and adapt to the markets today, all I'll get is rejection slips!

The junior department superintendent in one Midwest Sunday school where I taught junior boys was always thinking up new ways to spark interest. For a while we had a Scripture memory contest going in which the children could earn prizes for memorizing Scripture. Then we had a contest for bringing new children in.

During the summer this lovely middle-aged matron would dig out her camping tent and take the juniors to a somewhat primitive youth camp for several days, where they made lasting commitments to the Lord. Even though ours was a small-town church with a membership of about a hundred, we had a large junior department. I had contributed my share to

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Two PREPOSTEROUS Stories

Joel Belz
Asheville, N.C.

THERE ARE two main accounts going around these days about how the world began. Both are preposterous stories.

One story has it that a bigger-than-cosmic and very freakish collision spun off some raw materials which, when they combined, started a dog-eat-dog chain reaction in which the strongest specimens always multiplied and endured and the weakest always struggled and disappeared.

The other story is much simpler, much more personal—but still mind-stretching. It says that a supernatural God, obviously very old and very big and very powerful, decided one time to make everything that is.

Both stories, as I say, are preposterous. By that I simply mean that they are contrary to virtually everything we know and experience in our everyday lives as modern men and women and boys and girls. None of us has ever seen firsthand anything like what happened in either explanation.

But while the two stories have their preposterous nature in common, there is much more that keeps them distinct. In one explanation, everything started bad and became good. In the other explanation, everything started good and became bad. That's a huge difference.

And it is a difference that, if the adherents to either theory of origins were thoroughly consistent, would lead to drastically different approaches to taking care of what is here. In other words, your view of whether things started off good or started off bad should affect what kind of environmentalist you are.

So that no one supposes we're building a mountain out of a molehill, let's establish for sure that the original difference really exists. It is not hard to demonstrate.

> Even as Christians, we are proud people. We like to think we owe it to ourselves to eat, drink, and throw our wrapper out the window. It's humbling to think of ourselves as guests on someone else's property.

Descriptions vary, of course, about what things were like in the evolutionary beginning. But whatever account you choose, the words fall short of picturing something pleasant. Random, fiery, gaseous, slime, primeval—these and dozens of others speak of a spooky, rather than splendid, place to live.

God's creation is good

The Genesis story of special creation, on the other hand, stops no fewer than six times to say: "And God saw that it was good." Some folks say that's so the Hebrew poet could make the account symmetrical. But symmetrical or not, the impression you get is one of an altogether spectacular new place to live, with all in total readiness for the grand opening.

Yet oddly, neither evolutionists nor creationists tend to live consistently with what they believe about origins.

If, for example, evolutionists re-

ally believed that only the fittest survived, they would have little problem with loggers coming into Oregon to displace the spotted owl. After all, the loggers seem to be bigger, smarter, and better at handling tools. Through the whole evolutionary scheme of things, that's what has counted. Why should the cycle be intercepted now, and the advantage artificially thrown to the weaker specimens?

Similarly, if creationists seriously believed that the environment they inhabit is the handiwork of God, they would be jealous to protect and even enhance what their Creator Friend had put in their personal trust. They would instinctively view their role as stewards rather than owners (although they'll always insist their stewardship is to God, not to the state).

So why all this slippage? Why are we all so far from where we logically ought to be?

It has happened because none of us really believes the Bible when it says God looked at what He had made—and saw that it was very good.

Obviously, nonbelievers don't believe that; but they don't pretend to. And when they fail to live consistently or logically with their unbelieving starting point, we shouldn't be terribly surprised. Such inconsistent and illogical behavior is typical of unbelief.

What's more surprising is that we believers don't really believe how very good God's original creation was. Several factors contribute to our unbelief, almost all of them closely related to the doctrine of the Fall:

(1) *We underestimate the Fall's effect on our ability to see.* We fancy that from our present vantage point, we can read Genesis 1 and have a pretty accurate mental perspective of how good God's creation was. In doing so, we overestimate ourselves. God's original creation was far better than we fallen people can imagine.

(2) *We underestimate the Fall's effect on the creation.* We're so used to a fallen world that we tend to think of the unfallen creation as no more than what we now see—minus a few polluted streams, minus the polluted air, and minus the visual blight of strip mines and clear-cut forests. In fact, there can be no doubt that the original creation was a magnificently different place from anything we now see. So much of the creation now is the enemy of human beings. Then it was their willing partner. The Bible tells us the Fall made the difference.

(3) *We underestimate the Fall's effect on our own self-image.* The fall into sin is why we tend to see God's creation as something we own rather than as something we are to be stewards of. Pride was the firstfruit of the Fall, but it still takes its toll, much more than we realize. Even as Christians, we are proud people. We like to think we owe it to ourselves to eat, drink, and throw our wrapper out the window. It's humbling always to have to think of ourselves as guests on someone else's property.

The long view

One day there will be a new heaven and a new earth. I think there are hints in the Bible that they may outshine the original creation—but even if they match it, we'll be dumbfounded. It will be Preposterous Story No. 3, except we'll be there to see it for ourselves. All those terrible effects of the Fall will be undone.

Between now and then, part of our task as God's redeemed children is to do the same thing with the environment that we do with our personal behavior. Consistent with the petition in the Lord's Prayer ("Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"), we strive to make things look now just as much like they will look later as we possibly can. God put the creation here for our enjoyment—but hardly for our selfish consumption. God always has the long view of things, and He wants our children's children to enjoy what He called good.

For those who profess nothing in the first place, letting the palace fall into disrepair may not be too serious a matter. For those who knew how good it was in the beginning, however, the responsibility is big indeed. ❑

Joel Belz is Editor-in-Chief of World, *an Ashville, N.C., based weekly that focuses on current events from a Christian perspective. From the October 1993 issue of* Table Talk, *the publication of Ligonier Ministries and used by permission.*

Dan Quayle from page 3

places that have learned to bond couples for life."

How do we stem the tide of illegitimacy that threatens our cities, our nation, and millions of our citizens? Perhaps the best place to start is with ourselves and our churches. How much have we bought into what one commentator has called the pivotal ethical doctrine of secularism: that unlimited personal freedom is the essence of humanity? From there, it's easy to affirm the misguided notion that illegitimacy is a giant step toward "sexual liberation" and away from what President Clinton's AIDS Czar Kristine Gebbie calls a "repressed Victorian society."

But paradoxically, the widespread practice of so-called unlimited personal freedom leads straight to authoritarianism and the loss of authentic liberty. I'm convinced that unless churches clearly teach God's design for human sexuality, marriage, and human relationships and clearly communicate our Lord's love, hope, and forgiveness to folks trapped in the vicegrips of sin, the United States faces a bleak, ugly future. ❑

What About SUICIDE?

C. William Bailey
Durham, N.C.

OFTEN WHEN we struggle with the problem of suicide, and particularly when it involves a fellow Christian or family member, our concern is "what is that person's eternal destiny?" Is it the ultimate, "unforgivable sin?" After all, how can a person ask forgiveness when he or she is dead? Doesn't it break the commandment "thou shalt not kill?" As a course of action, isn't it a violation of God's justice and righteousness for which it is impossible for the person doing it to ask forgiveness?

This problem is one that many wise and devout persons have grappled with for a clear answer. In the Bible there is no direct statement about the morality of suicide as such; in fact, the word "suicide" is never used. But we can always look for biblical principles to guide us.

In God's hands

First, the only person whose eternal destiny we can really have any control over is our own. We make our own decisions and choose whom we will serve during this life. The Bible indicates that there may be some surprises about who will actually be in God's eternal kingdom. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven. . . Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. . .'" The point of this is that we cannot and must not judge the eternal salvation of anyone else and particularly by outward actions; this is in God's hands.

> We must emphasize that the grace of God which enables us to be saved is totally a gift.

As far as I can discover, the Bible records only four persons committing suicide: King Saul (1 Samuel 31:4); Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23); Zimri (1 Kings 16:18-19); and Judas (Matthew 27:5, Acts 1:18). Each was driven by the despair caused by failed plans and actions contrary to God's will.

But a number of good men noted in the Bible experienced times of serious despondency such as Moses (Numbers 11:15); Joshua (7:7); Elijah (1 Kings 19:4); Job (10:0); David (Psalm 42:1-5); Jeremiah (15:10), and even Jesus' disciples (Luke 24:17). It seems that their trust in God, though weak and faltering at times, enabled them to get through the difficult times. This

was not because they had superhuman strength or piety; God's provision of grace lifted and helped them to carry on in spite of serious problems.

The importance of God's grace

No doubt this is what we ought to focus on. We must emphasize that the grace of God which enables us to be saved is totally a gift. "The *gift of* God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The glorious fact of God's grace is that we do not earn nor relinquish our salvation on the basis of works. Once we have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we no longer need to walk a spiritual tightrope fearing that one mistake or sin will place our salvation in jeopardy. If a person who in a time of stress or despair commits suicide is deemed lost because he can not ask forgiveness, then so also is the person who loses his temper or commits some other sin and dies without being able to ask specific forgiveness.

We believe that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross forgives all sin, past, present, and future. His blood atones for the human condition of sinfulness which leads to all kinds of sinful acts including suicide. If we have trusted in Christ, we are saved! "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

From being a pastor, I personally know the problems in the human heart and mind that suicide causes. Of several Christian people I have known who have committed suicide, one particularly comes to mind. He was a dedicated minister for many years and one who accomplished many good things in the service of Jesus Christ. In later retirement years, he killed himself. I do not know why. Perhaps there was despondency brought about by problems of age or health. But here was a man who most knew as a godly man and there never was any reason to think otherwise. Yet, he chose to end his life. Will his dedicated service amount to nothing in God's eyes? Did he forfeit his right to a place in God's eternal kingdom? I think not, but what I think really does not matter nor change anything. I must reflect upon the love and tender compassion of Jesus Christ, his grace! I know he understands the hearts of all human beings, and I know that whatever he does with any of us will be absolutely the right thing.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. . ." Some sheep wander away; some may even fall off the cliff; but they still are his sheep. Let us trust in the mercy, righteousness, and justice of Jesus Christ. When we commit these matters wholly to him in the light of his grace and goodness, we will have peace. ❑

Give America a Breath of Fresh Prayer!

Unite With Countless Americans to Pray That God Will "Heal Our Land."

On Thursday, May 5, millions of men, women and children of all faiths will take time to celebrate the National Day of Prayer. They'll set aside a few precious moments—and any differences between them—and unite before God on our country's behalf. You can join them . . . at home, work or school.

If you believe our country needs healing, make plans to pray for America on May 5. To find out more about the National Day of Prayer and how you can organize an event in your community, write:

National Day of Prayer Task Force
P.O. Box 15616
Colorado Springs, CO 80935-5616
Or, call 719-531-3379

Bill Bailey assumed his first Advent Christian pastorate in Arena, N.Y., while a student at New England School of Theology in 1949. In the ensuing years he has served as pastor of several other Advent Christian churches, taught at Berkshire Christian College, and was Director of Publications at the General Conference offices. His most recent position was Minister of Education and Associate Pastor in North Myrtle Beach, S.C. He and his wife Belle now live in Durham, N.C., where he is employed as an administrative assistant at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Women's Ministries

ADVENT WOMEN OF INFLUENCE CHRISTIAN

Editor's Note: This article was presented on WHFMS Sunday at First Advent Christian Church in Lake City, Fla. last October.

Janice Chapman
Lake City, Fla.

TODAY, WE at First Advent Christian Church in Lake City, Fla., observe WH&FM Sunday. The day gives the church an opportunity to learn more about Advent Christian mission work in India, Japan, the Philippines; not to forget Malaysia, Nigeria, Liberia, Mexico, and yes, China.

Our career missionaries in India and Japan (except the Lay family) are retired or soon to be. Schools in those countries have been established to train national pastors to continue the ministry to their own people.

In the Philippines, the emphasis is also on training national leaders to do the work of evangelism in their own country among their own people. Toward that end two new missionaries, Harry and Etta Soucy, have arrived to teach at Oro Bible College.

The work in Malaysia, Nigeria, Liberia, and Mexico is carried out by national pastors and missionaries except for the administrative support they receive from the denominational office.

Occasionally we receive information from Advent Christian believers in China, the result of Advent Christian mission work there in the early 20th century.

What's in a name?

WH&FM. What's in a name? What is its significance?

1. W - Women. Advent Christian women adopted India, and from the start of A.C. Mission work there, the women were behind it 100%. Did it pay off? Yes!

With United Ministries and other changes in the administrative structure of the General Conference offices, the emphasis shifted from India and became more inclusive.

2. H - Home: The home part of the name recognizes responsibility we carry to assist the spread of the Gospel in Canada and the United States. Yesterday I heard a pastor say, "Until the women were organized for WHFM this church wasn't doing anything. Now we're planning to enlarge our Sunday school facilities. It all started with the ladies."

3. & - And: "And" includes and couples Home with Foreign. They are given equal importance. They go hand in hand.

4. F - Foreign: This word includes not only India, but the other mission fields as well. And outreach continues as we look ahead to new opportunities to share in the spread of the Gospel through avenues not now served by Advent Christian ministries.

5. M - Missions: This word suggests a purpose, a determination to accomplish. That purpose is evangelism—teaching and discipling to the end that God's kingdom will be multiplied around the world.

That is what WH&FM is. Women at home and abroad with a mission. Do you know Advent Christian women of influence? Let me introduce you to some of them:

A Sunday school teacher

"My Sunday school teacher—how well I remember her. She was my Sunday school teacher (who I'm sure I made mad more than a few times), a sitter, and a friend. I can still taste the divinity and Christmas cookies she made for me.

"I think my earliest memories of this woman are the times she would keep me, and we would catch big green and brown grasshoppers and put them in a coffee can with holes punched in the top. I also recall how she had fixed me some grits (or maybe it was oatmeal, but I know it was good.) I remember her cozy kitchen and all the wonderful delights for me therein. I remember how she would fix at least a hundred pounds of Christmas cookies. I would sit, and eat, and

eat, and eat. I would be so sick, I would almost curse those cookies, yet I always returned to them. The divinity she made was sacred stuff in my house. I recall how I used to sneak into the kitchen and get some of the divinity we had in the refrigerator. What divinity!

"I remember the Sundays that my teacher would have the class memorize the number of books in the Old Testament (39), the longest Psalm (Psalm 119), and the "Father of all Nations" (Abraham, or course). Some days, though, we would make her so crazy, and then she would say, 'I'm not going to teach you if you don't behave' or something like that. But, of course, our teacher treated us so well, we couldn't bear to part with her."

A pastor's wife

"Anyone who truly knows me, knows who my favorite pastor is. But what they might not know is that his wife had one of the biggest influences on my life.

"To me she was the perfect image of a lady. You never heard her argue or raise her voice. She always kept herself in tact because she knew people were always looking for her influence.

"She was also a pastor's wife. To me that speaks the best of her. I know it takes a special woman to be a pastor's wife. Not only was her husband called into ministry, but she as well was called. She went without complaint, to wherever God led her husband.

"I feel, that by watching and looking up to her, I have had the best example of how a lady should conduct herself. I haven't heard anyone who knew her that would say that she had no influence on the. She touched the hearts of everyone who knew her."

All have had an influence

Will you write a little something about a woman in our church that has had an influence in your life? "Sure,

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How Do Women Disciple?

Fern Smith
Lewiston, Idaho

WHEN I began thinking about the answer to this question, I felt overwhelmed. Then I realized perhaps that's the problem, the reason we aren't discipling. With so many "how-to" helps on the market today, our enthusiasm wanes. Where do we start? Which method will work for me? I hoped I could quickly find a "simple" outline I could share. I started with a variety of magazine articles, books, and tapes. No wonder we don't get involved! Disciple-making sounds like a major undertaking in this already too busy world.

Back to the source

Then, as usual, after trying all "my" avenues, I turned to the resource that inevitably takes what the world would make difficult and followed the example of the New Testament discipler, the apostle Paul.

I invite you to look at 1 Thessalonians. Read the whole book. It's short! Then go back and let God's Spirit guide you through passages that will give you an outline for disciple-making tailored just for you. Highlight all the verses Paul shares on how and what he and his disciplers taught the Thessalonians. I especially like 1 Thess. 2:7: "We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children." What a job description for us women who are nurturers! Now use the verses you have highlighted and jot down how and what you have been personally called to do as a discipler.

Who can we disciple?

Look around you. Take a survey of potential people. Start where you are. Are you a parent? Disciple your child. Are you a Sunday school teacher? Begin making disciples in the classroom. Do you work with other women in the church? Ask God to bring you a discipling relationship. In every pew there are people who want to be discipled. Where are the disciplers? We talk about lifestyle evangelism. How about lifestyle discipling?

This means starting each day with a discipling mind-set. Lifestyle discipling goes beyond the small-group setting and into daily life. In Mark 3:14 we see Jesus choosing lifestyle discipling, "He appointed twelve—designating them apostles, "that they might be with him." He invited them into his daily walk.

In 1 Thessalonians listen to Paul's words: "we lived among you" (1:5), "became a model" (1:7), "shared our lives" (2:8), "made every effort to see you" (2:17), "know what instructions we gave you" (4:2). As I thoughtfully looked over my adult life as a Christian and recalled the many people whom I've encountered, I recognized specific people God had given me to influence. I would like to think that I not only shared the Gospel, but my life as well, "encouraging, comforting and urging them to live lives worthy of God who calls us into his kingdom and glory" (2:12). Thinking back, perhaps you too have a list. Now prepare one for today.

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Daily Dying

A Call for Discipline

Miriam Snow Priebe
Gulfport, Fla.

RECENTLY we've been hearing a great deal about the need for self-expression. Secular magazines and "self-help" groups have been telling us in many different ways about the need to be true to ourselves. "If your marriage is preventing you from realizing your full potential," says a popular columnist, "it's time to end your marriage." Christian counselors and periodicals have taken up the refrain, "Be true to your innermost self first!"

A few years ago I attended a conference for clergy wives where we were urged to be butterflies. "Pursue your own personal career first," we were told. "Your role as clergy wife is secondary." There was some merit to the conference but indirectly it weakened the ministry of several young clergymen and helped to end the marriage of one clergy couple.

I remember one of the older clergy wives saying aloud at one of the sessions, "You are saying that we must always be happy. Why do we always have to be happy? There are many things in life that aren't fun but are worthwhile." Her remark was greeted by blank stares from most of the young women present.

Discipline. Most Protestant Christians hear little these days about the need for discipline. Neither do we hear many sermons on the text, "I die daily." Nevertheless the Lord requires us to discipline ourselves—for his sake and for the sake of others.

In my early years of marriage—tired from tending young children and from the general demands of running a home I used to say, "How I wish I could spend a day at a convent! Think of the lovely life of the nuns who live in quietness and contemplation—praying, singing, and meditating!" Later in life I came to know a group of Irish missionary nuns and I found out that their lives were not always quiet and easy. I learned that they did a lot more than sing, pray, and meditate. I learned that they had many frustrations in adjusting to each other and in dealing with the people they were trying to help. One dear sister said to me, "Being single is a discipline just as being married is a discipline. We each have to live within the discipline to which we are called." I had never really thought of marriage as a discipline, but no married Christian would deny that it is!

> "Why do we always have to be happy? There are many things in life that aren't fun but are worthwhile."

I have often puzzled over the dying daily about which the apostle Paul spoke. There was no doubt that he died daily—ship-wrecked, beaten, imprisoned, often cold and hungry for the Lord's sake. Like most American Christians I lead a safe life. I have never suffered imprisonment, beatings, fire and sword for my Savior's sake. Neither have most of you. We hear of great Christian missionaries of the past and present and we feel ashamed. Yet we too are called to discipline ourselves in the place where we live—and in the married or single state in which we find ourselves. Do we ever die to self?

Take courage! When you get up from the table and go to a sink full of dirty dishes for the sake of your family you are dying to self. When you make a concession or a compromise in order to preserve your marriage and fulfill your marriage vows you are dying to self. When you take the time to help your neighbor when you would rather be resting, exercising, or writing a poem, you are dying to self. When you are faithful to your marriage partner in the face of strong temptation; when you resist the impulse to take what belongs to someone else—that is dying. When you put your marriage ahead of your career or deprive yourself of some innocent pleasure which might hurt your children—you are dying to self.

Disciple from page 15

Are we qualified to disciple?

Look at 1 Thess. 5:23, 24, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and *he will do it!*" If you have a relationship with Jesus Christ; if you are into God's Word and applying it to your daily life; if prayer is your source of power, and if you have a heart for God's people, *he will do it*! Remember that you cannot take someone further than you yourself have come—but God can.

What do we get out of discipling?

Look again at Paul's words, "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? *Is it not you*? Indeed, *you* are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19). Who is Paul talking about? Those whom he had discipled! I look forward with anticipation. I wonder who will be there when Jesus comes, because of me. I am burdened for those who might have been there, except for me.

Women discipling women! That's what we need in Advent Christian churches. I encourage you to get together with a friend and discuss your feelings. Study the Scriptures. Ask your pastor to help you get started. Take a look at some discipling materials. As you do these things, be spending time in prayer, personally asking God to speak to your heart about this important ministry for women. In the end, after we've been faithful to Jesus' final request, I hope our "work was produced by faith, our labor prompted by love and our endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:3). *Happy discipling!* ❑

Of course these are small things—things that we know a Christian ought to do and for which we don't deserve credit. All of us need to do a lot more "dying." Nevertheless it's comforting to me to know that in small ways I do die to self and lift up Christ. It inspires me to go on trying.

We don't have to be butterflies—always soaring, always happy. Our true inner selves should reveal Christ. He lives within us. When we live disciplined lives rather than nurturing our egos surprisingly enough we find contentment and happiness here on earth. Let us not forget that dying daily for Christ's sake is a small enough sacrifice when we remember that because of God's grace through Christ's sacrifice for us we shall live forever! ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

April

1 Pray that participants in the **Asian Strategy Conference** will sense God's leading as they discuss the future of Advent Christian missions in that part of the world.

2 Praise God that **Pastor Melchor and Jane Jandayan** have sensed God's call to move from the Philippines to assume pastoral leadership at the Advent Christian Church in San Francisco.

3 Celebrate today with Christians throughout the world as we mark the **resurrection** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

4 Pray that God will provide strength and encouragement to **Harry and Etta Soucy** as they continue their first full-year of ministry at Oro Bible College.

5 Praise God for the commitment of **Filipino** Advent Christians to reach their friends and associates with the gospel.

6 Pray for **Margaret Helms** and **David Vignali** as they communicate Christ's love in the Philippines.

7 Praise God for the willingness of Advent Christian pastors and missionaries in **Malaysia** to proclaim the gospel in the face of laws prohibiting Christians to speak with Muslims about their faith.

8 Pray that students studying at **Tamil Bible Institute** in Malaysia will be well equipped to communicate the gospel in the face of opposition.

9 Praise God for the students being equipped for ministry by Advent Christian missionaries in India through the **School of Evangelism**.

10 Pray that as Advent Christian congregations throughout Canada and the United States participate in **Penny Crusade** today, the work of Advent Christian world missions will progress and expand.

11 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Barbara White, Beryl Joy Hollis,** and **Marion Damon** continue to have in India.

12 Pray that God's Spirit will touch many lives in **India** and draw them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

13 Praise God for the strong spiritual leadership exercised by Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Japan**.

14 Pray for **Steve and Ann Lay** as they continue their work in establishing a new Advent Christian congregation in the West Kobe area of Japan.

15 Praise God for the opportunities that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** are having this spring to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions in congregations here at home.

16 Pray that as **Ruth Soucier** teaches English to her Japanese students, she will have opportunities to communicate the good news of Christ's love.

17 Praise God for the **religious freedom** that you enjoy as you prepare to worship him this morning.

18 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they communicate Christ's love for the people of inner city Memphis.

19 Praise God for the growing number of Advent Christian congregations that have become involved in various **short-term mission projects**.

20 Pray that God will guide director of world missions **Harold Patterson** as he seeks the Lord's leading for future mission fields.

21 Praise God for the commitment of **Tecate Bible Institute** students as they train to reach people in Mexico with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

22 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they continue to establish a strong Advent Christian congregation in the El Florido district of Tijuana, Mexico.

23 Praise God for the dedicated work of **Advent Christian pastors** and pray that God will speak through them tomorrow as they proclaim the Scriptures to their congregations.

24 Pray that your congregation will touch lives in **your community** with the gospel.

25 Praise God for the work of Advent Christian congregations in **Nigeria** and **Liberia** as they face continuing political unrest and the threat of opposition.

26 Pray for peace in nations that have suffered the ravages of civil war: **Somalia, Sudan, Bosnia,** and **Liberia**.

27 Praise God for the expansion of Advent Christian **student ministries** onto several new college campuses during the spring 1994 semester.

28 Pray that God's kingdom will expand and lives will be touched throughout the **Islamic world**.

29 Praise God for the growth of the **Center for Advent Christian Studies** at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

30 Pray for the **General Conference staff** and **regional superintendents** as they seek to serve Advent Christian congregations and agencies.

Influence from page 15

no problem," I said. But there *is* no *one* person in this church that has had an influence in my life. Now I have a problem, and what a wonderful problem to have! You see, there is not one lady in this church that has *not* had an influence in my life.

"Some have clothed me, some have fed me, some have supported me monetarily, some have lent me their shoulder, some have supported me spiritually, some have taught me to cook, some have threatened to turn me over their knee. All of them have loved me, and if I researched, I would more than likely find that all of them have done it all in some way, shape, or fashion.

"God has truly loved and blessed me through the ladies here at First Advent Christian Church. Although it seems so little to say—I praise Him for each of you, and love you all."

Daily Christian living is vital

What do these women have in common? Preaching, telling Bible stories, taking these young people to church, leading them in a salvation experience? No, these are not the things thought worthy of mention by the writers of these testimonials. "She treated us so well we couldn't bear to part with her." "You never heard her argue or raise her voice. . . The best example of how a lady should conduct herself." "Some have clothed me, . . . fed me, supported me monetarily, . . . lent me their shoulder. . . Some have supported me spiritually."

Yes, Advent Christian women of influence. Not only those who served faithfully on foreign fields, whose names we recognize, but a roll call of the women of First Advent Christian Church in Lake City, Florida. This influence is sometimes referred to as lifestyle evangelism. "God has truly loved and blessed me through the ladies here at First Advent Christian Church. Although it seems so little to say—I praise Him for each of you, and love you all."

Remember, someone is observing our walk with the Lord. May it continue to be worthy of Him and a blessing to the observers. ❑

Janice Chapman and her husband Bill have served Advent Christian congregations in North Carolina, New Mexico, and Florida. She is currently Vice-president of the WHFMS at First Advent Christian church in Lake City, Fla., where Bill serves as organist and associate pastor.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

God gave us two ears and one mouth, it's been said, so that we might listen twice as much as we talk, but even that proportion is far too high on the side of talking.

—*Dallas Willard*

The essence of sin is the refusal to recognize that we are accountable to God at all.

—*Oswald Chambers*

At various points in U.S. history (the 1850s, the time of Prohibition, and most recently the Moral Majority movement of the 1980s), the Christian church has marked an ascendancy into politics. Now, it appears, the church and politics may be heading in different directions. I, for one, feel no great sense of alarm over the fact. Our real challenge, the focus of our energy, should not be to Christianize the United States (always a losing battle) but rather to strive to be Christ's church in an increasingly hostile world.

—*Philip Yancey in* Christianity Today *(August 16, 1993).*

An odd thing about Christians is that they are both here and not here. Put differently, they cannot help but be worldly, since they are inescapably part of the stuff and time that we call the world, but their identity depends most critically on their devotion to another world that is already present in the form of a promise, in the form of the Promised One.

—*Richard John Neuhaus in* Building the Free Society

Most fundamentalists and evangelicals are not potential members of the Christian Coalition. . . It's the media. . . that keep the Religious Right in the public eye and exaggerate the movement's influence. "There's a symbiotic relationship between the media and the Religious Right," [Andrew] Greeley says. "The Religious Right benefits from its characterization as having far more power that it actually does." Reporters benefit from having an easily tapped source of "bogeymen" to fill news pages and air time.

—*Richard Morin in* The Washington Post Weekly *(November 1, 1993)*

The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitudes, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child. And when the family collapses it is the children that are usually damaged. When it happens on a massive scale the community itself is crippled. So, unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together, all the rest—schools, playgrounds, and public assistance, and private concern—will never be enough.

—*President Lyndon B. Johnson; June 4, 1965*

America's mission to the world did not end when communism ended. Our mission is ongoing. Our mission is to continue to tell the world that we are *for* the freedom and human rights of all men and women, for all time—and to do everything we can to transform the ancient dream and hope of freedom into a democratic reality everywhere! And with God's help we will.

—*Jack Kemp*

The deepest needs of the church today are not structural, but spiritual. Until we know Christ and the power of his resurrection, we will be evangelicals in name only.

—*John Seel in* The Evangelical Forfeit

First radio, then television, have assaulted and overturned the privacy of the home, the real American privacy, which permitted the development of a higher and more independent life within democratic society. Parents can no longer control the atmosphere of the home and have even lost the will to do so. With great subtlety and energy, television enters not only the room, but also the tastes of old and young alike, appealing to the immediately pleasant and subverting whatever does not conform to it.

—*Allen Bloom in* The Closing of the American Mind

Rethink! from 9

the building of my class by enthusiastically promoting the contests—and by leading most of my 15 boys to the Lord.

As a leader or teacher, what are your particular problems? Why not rethink the situations? Discuss it with your co-workers in a brainstorm session. Perhaps just as that idea flashed into my head to share with Daniel, so one of the group may come up with a terrific new approach.

If it's not working, why not rethink it? ❑

Dr. Muriel Larson is a certified counselor and founder of Women Victorious. She has written several books including Petals of Praise *(Moody Press, 1991) and has had articles published in a variety of magazines and periodicals. She lives in Greenville, S.C., where she maintains a practice in counseling.*

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WITNESS

May 1994

HOMOSEXUALITY

A Christian Perspective

Features

Special Section— Homosexuality: A Christian Perspective

Learning to Overcome 4

Out of their own personal struggles with homosexual practice, God has led Richard Buchan and Linda Marshall not only to freedom in Christ but to work with others facing the same issues. They talk about how God has worked in their lives and the importance of a compassionate, biblical response to issues surrounding homosexuality.

If Your Family Member is Gay 6

A short listing of Christian ministries that offer support for people struggling with issues relating to homosexuality and their family members.

Homosexuality: What the Bible Teaches 8

Sam Warren surveys the Bible's teaching regarding homosexuality and reminds us that while homosexual practice, like adultery, greed, and other sinful practices, is contrary to God's purposes, no sin is beyond the reach of God's mercy and grace.

It's All Right to Dream Again 12

"The stone was moved—not for Jesus—but for the women; not so Jesus could come out, but so the women could see in!" Max Lucado reminds us that the same God who moved the stone two-thousand years ago can still move stones in our lives today.

What's Cooking in the New Age Kitchen? 14

In the first of a five part series, Andy Bjorklund surveys the beliefs of the New Age Movement and the impact it's having in our communities.

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Homosexuality. What do the Scriptures teach? How should Christians respond? Special section begins on page four.

—photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Fear or Grace?

"IF THE CHURCH gets overrun with homosexuals, that will be terrific. They can take their place in the pews right next to the liars, gossips, materialists, and all the rest of us who entertain sin in our lives." The source of those words, quoted from a recent issue of *Leadership*? Ed Dobson—former "Moral Majority" leader and graduate of the most fundamentalist of all fundamentalist colleges, Bob Jones University. Several years ago, Dobson changed his ministry focus from trying to save America through political means to concentrating on communicating the gospel to broken, hurting people and seeing renewal among Christians in their walk with God.

> When we confront homosexual practice, we often respond with neglect and fear instead of grace.

Part of that change involved learning how he and his congregation could minister to people suffering with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Without any compromise of what the Scriptures teach concerning homosexual practice, Ed Dobson is known as a friend to people struggling with issues relating to homosexuality. One gay talk-show host introduced him with these words, "While his congregation disagrees with us on sexuality issues, they love people and stand with us on the AIDS issue." Dobson told *Leadership*, "When I die, if someone stands up and says, "Ed Dobson loved homosexuals," I will have accomplished something with my life."

Let's be honest. Most evangelicals have an especially tough time dealing with issues relating to homosexuality. Up until about five years ago, I thought that homosexual practice was an especially heinous act different from any other kind of sin. But God began to show me that my preconceived notions were not in line with what the Scriptures teach about the nature of sin and the overcoming power of his grace. It's easy to apply double standards. We respond with patience and understanding to someone, especially a new believer, who struggles with alcohol or drug addiction, gossip or greed. And we should. But when we confront homosexual practice, we often respond with neglect and fear instead of grace.

Stanton Jones puts it well. Writing in *Christianity Today*, he says, "The homosexual people I know are very much like me. They want love, respect, acceptance, companionship, significance, forgiveness. But, like all of us sinners, they choose the wrong means to get what they want. We, the church, have the opportunity to demonstrate, in our words and in our lives, God's love for the homosexual person. If we truly love, we will act on that love." We can do that by making sure that our words are not permeated with hatred and insults. We can do that by repudiating violence against homosexuals. And we can do that in Jones' words by making our churches "sanctuar[ies] where repentant men and women can share with others the sexual desires they feel and still receive prayerful support and acceptance."

That's what Jesus did. Look at John's gospel

continued on page 23

To Our Readers

TWO IMPORTANT things about this issue. First, Dennis Peterson, our designer, is recovering from a serious illness that caused him to miss several weeks of work. Because of that, the March 1994 issue was mailed to you several weeks late. And we were not able to produce an April 1994 issue. To compensate for that, we will produce separate issues in July and August so that you will not miss an issue on your subscription. Pray that God will continue to restore Dennis to good health and strength in the weeks to come.

Last year, we promised you an issue addressing homosexuality and concerns relating to it from a Christian perspective. With this issue, we fulfill that promise. We don't pretend that these articles represent the last word on this difficult, yet important issue. But we do hope you'll find them informative, helpful, and faithful to the teaching of the Bible. My appreciation to Sam Warren, Richard Buchan, and Linda Marshall for their willingness to communicate what God has taught them through these pages.

Learning to OVERCOME

A conversation with Rick Buchan and Linda Marshall

Across the United States, ministries designed to help people overcome homosexuality are popping up. Richard Buchan and Linda Marshall work with two such ministries in Charlotte, North Carolina. Advent Christian Witness editor Bob Mayer asked Rick and Linda to describe the struggles faced by men and women working to overcome homosexuality. They both shared their personal struggle with homosexual practice, how God has worked in their lives, and some ways that Christians can work with people with a compassionate, biblical understanding.

Could you tell us something about the work of Crossroads?

Rick Buchan: Crossroads is a ministry designed to meet people struggling with their sexuality, especially with homosexuality, where they are and help them to know that homosexuality is something God can help us deal with. Homosexuality is not a gift that God has given us but something that leads to death and destruction because it's not according to God's plan.

Our ministry reaches out in a variety of ways. We offer support groups for people because when people want to face these issues or leave the homosexual lifestyle, they need support beyond talking to just one or two people. If they can work with others going in the same direction, it encourages them to notice things they need to work on, get needed encouragement, and find support from others when they struggle. And as the ministry leader, I also do a lot of face-to-face and telephone counseling with individuals.

> I personally struggled with homosexuality while in college. I had a roommate who had the same kinds of struggles and we explored our sexuality together. After a year, I could not reconcile myself to that.

Linda, you're involved with a related ministry called Recovery House. What's the focus of your work?

Linda Marshall: Currently in Charlotte, several groups of folks who are wrestling with the issues that Rick discussed are meeting together. Recovery House is designed to be a place where those groups can meet and where people can be ministered to in a safe environment. We minister to men and women struggling with homosexuality and to their parents and spouses.

Crossroads is part of a coalition of ministries working with homosexuals called Exodus International. When did that movement start?

Rick Buchan: Exodus International formed about sixteen years ago as local ministries began popping up across the country. Churches realized that this was an issue that needed to be dealt with. People were struggling with homosexuality and they didn't know how to deal with that. And none of the other ministries knew that anyone else was doing the same thing.

So Exodus International started out with local ministry leaders coming together to find out what everyone else was doing. It's developed into an organization with over sixty ministries in the United States plus ministries in Europe and in the South

Pacific. Exodus is still a coalition of leaders from ministries to people struggling with homosexuality. Exodus maintains a listing of ministries that deal with homosexuality from a compassionate, biblical standard; in other words, ministries that teach that while homosexual practice is sinful we must reach out to people with the love and compassion of Christ.

The annual conference is a highlight of Exodus. It lasts for a week and features workshops led by ministry leaders from across the United States. During that time, there's wonderful worship and excellent biblical teaching about every aspect of human sexuality, homosexuality in particular, AIDS, and other related issues.

Rick, how has the Lord led you into leadership with Crossroads?

Rick Buchan: I personally struggled with homosexuality while in college. I had a roommate who had the same kinds of struggles and we explored our sexuality together while we were rooming in college. After a year, I could not reconcile myself to that. I had felt a call to Christian ministry and I could not reconcile what God said in the Scriptures with what I was doing. I knew that God wasn't wrong, so that meant that I was. From that point, I committed myself to going the way God wanted me to.

But my homosexual feelings didn't suddenly stop and I had to struggle with that. I became interested in Bible translation, got married, and worked overseas for over nine years. All through that time, I struggled to understand and overcome the homosexual feelings I continued to have. But there was nobody I felt safe talking with, nobody I knew who had learned to effectively deal with these emotions.

About eight years ago, I became ill and had to return to the United States. I found out about Exodus and became involved with the ministry. And about four years ago, my wife and I started Crossroads here in Charlotte. Before starting, we gathered with several people and spent about nine months asking God, "What do you want us to do? What direction do you want us to take?" We felt like we were ready to start meetings so we did. And we continue to try to be sensitive to God's leading.

Linda, how have you sensed God's leading as you work to develop Recovery House?

Linda Marshall: I've been recovering from homosexuality for almost nine years and part of my background was coming through the twelve-step work of Alcoholics Anonymous. So my vision for Recovery House is a ministry of enabling people to overcome homosexuality through the twelve steps.

> But my homosexual feelings didn't suddenly stop and I had to struggle with that.

While as a young girl I had some church background, I was totally involved in a homosexual lifestyle for seventeen years and my last relationship lasted for eleven years. When I first became sober, I realized the need to become honest about everything in my life. Because if I didn't, I would probably drink again. I began to ask a Christian friend questions about homosexuality. Is it right or wrong? That was a big issue for me.

That person continued to love me and patiently show me the Scriptures. And I finally realized that yes, it was possible for me to change. Then I went to Exodus and they affirmed that there is a way out of homosexuality and that God's Word is true. I have a message to share through Recovery House, that people have a safe place to come and share their struggles. They will be listened to and loved unconditionally. And they can find fellowship and be encouraged to participate in a local church. Discipleship is also a real important part of that as well.

As you've shared your stories, I hear you saying that recovery from homosexuality is a process and that it involves having people accept you where you are. Why do Christians have a hard time with that?

Rick: We live in an "instant" society where we want things to happen right away. And many people who come to our ministries drop out after several weeks because they haven't been "cured." They feel that it hasn't "worked" because healing hasn't happened instantaneously.

But homosexuality is a condition that develops over years and it takes time to deal with all the emotional ramifications of it. It's not just a matter of deliverance. Now there may be some deliverance needed. But that's not the total recovery process. Learning to deal with emotions is one of the main issues and that takes time!

Some Christians respond to homosexual men and women with a mixture of contempt and neglect. Recently, a pastor in Kansas made front page news by declaring that "God hates homosexuals!" Is that God's view?

Linda: Definitely not! I know that God loves each and every one of us that has come out of the homosexual lifestyle and his Word clearly states that. Look at the people that Jesus went to—alcoholics, prostitutes, people with real struggles. Those were the folks that he loved. They needed him. I can find no place where God does not love homosexuals.

Rick: The confusion comes fr[illegible] fact that God does hate sin, whatever kind it is, wherever he finds it. God hates sin but he loves the sinner.

What causes homosexuality? Is it strictly

physiological or psychological? Or are there a variety of causes?

Linda: It's a difficult issue because there are a variety of causes and they affect people differently. In my case, I was struggling with several addictions including alcohol. And I was sexually abused. All of these are major issues for the persons dealing with them. In my life, they kept me from knowing who I truly am in Christ.

Rick: One of the reasons why I think people argue that they were born homosexual is because when they try to pinpoint it, they discover there is no one cause for homosexuality. The truth is that many different factors can lead to homosexual practice—abuse issues, emotional struggles, identification issues—boys who have not been affirmed in their masculinity or girls in their femininity.

You cannot say to a person, "You're a homosexual because of this." Instead, you start by asking, "Why do you think you have homosexual feelings?" Sometimes, we can't answer that because we don't understand the things in our lives that can cause those feelings to develop.

But we're learning more and more. There could be biological factors that predispose a person to homosexuality. Even though that has not been verified scientifically, that is possible. But just because they have a predisposition toward something does not give them license to do whatever they want. There is good evidence that some people are predisposed to alcoholism. But that doesn't make alcoholism right for them.

> Homosexuality is a condition that develops over years and it takes time to deal with all the emotional ramifications of it. It's not just a matter of deliverance.

In your view, why did God place homosexual practice on the same level with prostitution, adultery, and other forms of sexual sin?

Rick: I think it's because God has established one way for sexual expression and that's within the marriage covenant. And anything outside of that is sinful and is destructive to our relationships with our spouse, with others, and ultimately with God. That's why God condemns sexual sin including sex outside of marriage.

But our culture has a standard different from God's. That also brings a lot of confusion into people's minds.

Let's address a practical issue that some of our readers might face in the future. Suppose a son or daughter informs their parents that he or she is gay. Suppose a husband or wife tells their spouse that they are homosexual. How would you encourage the parents or the spouse to respond?

Rick: I've had quite a few folks contact me after being confronted by their spouse or their child. It can be devastating and many times people respond with anger, frustration, and rejection of the family member.

But in the long run, rejection is not helpful to the person struggling. A person struggling with homosexuality has inner pain and hurt that needs to be dealt with. They need acceptance. And just because a person does things that are not along God's lines does not mean they cannot be part of the family anymore.

In dealing with a family member, a person needs to realize that their child is theirs not because they've behaved properly or because the child has done everything they've wanted them to do. In the same way, our spouses aren't perfect either. Those relationships are there because God has put us in families and we need to respect the needs of our children or

If your family member is gay...

You needn't go it alone. Several Christian ministries can help with support groups and resources including the following:

Exodus International
P.O. Box 2121
San Rafael, CA 94912
(415) 454-1017

His Heart Ministries
12162 E. Mississippi Ave.
P.O. Box 12321
Aurora, CO 80011
(303) 369-2961

Spatula Ministries
P.O. Box 444
LaHabra, CA 90633

Desert Stream
12488 Venice Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90066
(310) 572-0140

Amazing Grace
Jane Boyer, director
Portland, Me.
(207)879-2554

Crossroads Ministries of Charlotte
P.O. Box 10388
Charlotte, NC 28212

Exodus International provides a referral service to ministries across the United States that work with homosexuals from a compassionate biblical approach. Spatula is a ministry specifically for parents and family members of homosexuals.

our spouses right where they are.

But we cannot encourage people to continue in sin. So it's difficult to learn how to love and accept a person where he or she is in the midst of the sin. Not to encourage the sin, but to love and encourage the person in whatever way they can. That's the attitude I would encourage people to develop. And I think only God can help us do that.

And that's the attitude we can have when a family member, a personal friend, or anyone we know who is struggling with issues relating to sexuality.

Rick: Absolutely. And with any kind of sin that can be involved in a person's life which can be destructive.

People hear from the various "gay-affirmative" groups their belief that homosexuals cannot change. Can homosexuals change?

Rick: Yes! But what you mean by "change" is part of the frustration we face in dealing with this issue. We've run into men who say, "I want to stop lusting after men and start lusting after women." That's not what God intends for us, that we exchange one lust for another.

The type of change we focus on is breaking free from the bondage that a particular sin has on life. From there we focus on the ramifications of sin in how one views himself, his relationship to God, and his relationships with others. The more we look at that, the more we can change and rectify our relationships. We begin to discover healing in our relationships, and in our own emotions and feelings. And we discover that God can begin changing the feelings that come out of our hearts.

That's happening in my own life. And we're finding that it's happening in the lives of people around us.

Linda, you've worked with people going through the change process. What does it look like?

Linda: In my own life and in my work with women coming out of lesbianism, at the beginning, there's a desire to begin moving toward femininity. This is a very gradual process of learning to accept myself as a woman.

That came about as I began to experience God's love for me and what he actually wanted for my life. I'm not disassociated from my feelings anymore and I'm beginning to know who I am in Christ. I can accept who I am and know that I'm a worthwhile person.

Prior to this, my life seemed so small. I was drinking, doing drugs, living with a woman, and totally withdrawn from life. Now I've become active in my community and in my local church.

Self-esteem is one of the first changes that I see. Also, there's a restored sense of hope. That was key for me—when I discovered that there was hope and that God could do this in my life. Prior to that, I was depressed. I wanted to know and serve God but

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We've run into men who say, "I want to stop lusting after men and start lusting after women." That's not what God intends for us, that we exchange one lust for another.

Homosexuality

Sam Warren
Jacksonville, Fla.

"I'M GETTING out of here! I'll pick up my things in the morning!" Those were some of my comments many years ago after being confronted sexually by a homosexual roommate in college. Frankly, I didn't know how to handle that situation.

I was stunned to discover that a homosexual person was enrolled in a Christian college studying for the ministry. Now, years later, I've realized this may have been more common than I had ever imagined. Among evangelical denominations and colleges, the percentage of homosexually-inclined persons is probably no different than in society at large.

The presence of people who advocate and engage in homosexual practice cannot be denied. And the practice of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle has begun to find acceptance even within the church. In 1991, a task force of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) recommended the acceptance of homosexuals as full participating members of the church.

By taking this position, the task force rejected the Bible as God's Word and standard for living. The problem with Scripture, in their opinion, is that it supports the concept of heterosexual marriage as the only acceptable design for expressing sexuality, a notion they labeled as "homophobic" and "heterosexist."

It's unlikely that things will change much in the future. Abortion and homosexuality as moral and political issues will not fade away. And the aftermath of the sexual revolution will be one of the major issues facing the church in the next ten to twenty years, perhaps more. The church will be increasingly occupied with helping AIDS sufferers and other victims of the empty promises of sexual "liberation."

Fortunately, the practice of homosexuality is not accepted by everyone within the boundaries of the church, especially among evangelicals. However, in this day and age when science and personal experience determine how people, including many Christians, make decisions, it's essential that the church bring the teaching of the Bible and its impact on critical issues of our time into clear focus.

Unfortunately, there's a great deal of silence in the church today when it comes to articulating the Bible's teaching on "hot" issues. The end result is that even Christians are ignorant of the truth and ultimately confused when forced to confront the onslaught of arguments for acceptance being thrown at them by the homosexual community and those who support them. In what follows, I hope to provide you with a clear understanding of what the Bible teaches about homosexuality.

Homosexuality and the Bible

The temptation to reinterpret the Bible's teaching on a particular subject is increased when it appears that the answer is "no." For those who support homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle, the Scripture provides no room for this view. Consequently, other approaches are used in an attempt to justify this behavior that is contrary to the standard of God. Unfortunately, some of these proposed

explanations for the legitimacy of homosexuality sound semi-convincing to an ear not tuned to the frequency of the Word of God.

According to David the psalmist, the Word of God is a lamp and a light for our feet as we walk along the path of life. Consequently, anyone who is interested in knowing God's view of homosexuality need only turn to the Scriptures to receive direction. Much of the effort to justify homosexuality today has little to do with the teaching of the Bible. When the Bible is consulted, there is more often than not an attempt to read into the biblical text a meaning not intended by the author or supported by the context.

In our search for God's truth, we must move beyond semantics. *Anyone* can make a word mean something that it doesn't if they want to. However, if one wants to know the "true" meaning of a word, it's essential to consider the context. Without context, everything is permissible. However, within a given context, only certain things are permissible. What then does the Bible say about homosexuality?

Some proposed explanations for the legitimacy of homosexuality sound semi-convincing to an ear not tuned to the frequency of the Word of God.

The hard facts about homosexuality

Homosexuality can only be understood by understanding heterosexuality. The Bible begins by teaching that God's plan for creation was built around a heterosexual relationship. Once God created humankind in his image (Gen. 1:26), he directed them to ". . . be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. . ." (Gen. 1:28). This is only possible within a heterosexual relationship. In Genesis 2, we find an explanation behind this command. Adam was lonely. Therefore, God determined to find him a suitable helper. After seeking a "suitable helper" among the animals, God chose to provide Adam a partner for life by taking a part of his own body to make a woman (Gen. 2:22). It is at this point that man was distinguished from woman and it was in this relationship that Adam was to fulfill God's command to "fill the earth." Consequently, God said from that point on man would leave his ". . . father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:25).

In this context, becoming "one flesh" symbolizes the fact that man and woman are meant for each other and that without each other true oneness is not possible. It's significant that the Bible notes that within this God-ordained relationship Adam and Eve felt no shame. They felt no "shame" because their relationship was natural according to God's plan. According to this text, writes David Roper, "the only one flesh (sexual) experience that the Bible recognizes is the sexual union of a man and his wife and it is in that exclusive relationship (where) no shadow of shame or embarrassment will ever be cast."

The command to "become one flesh" preceded the first couple's experience with sin and disobedience. Once sin entered the picture, shame also entered. After eating the forbidden fruit, Moses writes about the experience of Adam and Eve:

"She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Gen. 3:6-7).

Through the symbolism of fig leaves, Adam and Eve demonstrated that shame had entered their experience as God's first couple. What was natural and normal for them had now become awkward and shameful. The presence of sin in the first couple's life had only just begun to do its damage. Historically speaking, it was not long before Cain killed his brother Abel; Lamech killed men for wounding and injuring him; and ultimately the complete corruption of humankind leading God to destroy every living person except one righteous man, Noah (Gen. 6:8-10).

Sodom's sin

Sin was not done wreaking havoc on God's creation. It was not long before humanity, God's masterpiece, began to act outside of his original plan, especially as it pertained to God's design for sexuality. As we progress through the Bible, there is no other text which demonstrates this more than the story of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:4-10).

God described Sodom as a place of wickedness, filled with people who were sinning greatly against the Lord (Gen. 13:13). When talking to Abraham about his intentions to check out the sin in Sodom, God decided to tell Abraham about what he intended to do so that he would learn ". . . to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (Gen. 18:19). Sodom, however, was characterized by sin and immorality.

The degree of Sodom's sin was made clear during the visit of the angels to the house of Lot (Gen. 19:3). Attempts have been made by those who advocate homosexual practice to suggest that the problem with Lot and the men of Sodom was inhospitality, not homosexuality. While Ezekiel declares that the Sodomites were inhospitable (Ezek. 16:49), they were equally guilty of committing "detestable" acts before the Lord (Ezek. 16:47). What, however, were these detestable acts?

While staying in the home of Lot (at his insistence; most likely due to

his knowledge of the sinful environment), the two angels were propositioned by the men of Sodom to have sex (Gen. 19:5). Advocates of a gay lifestyle have sought to suggest that the Hebrew word *yadha* in this context means to "know" in the sense of wanting to meet the strangers in Lot's house. This, however, does not agree with the text. If the men of the city only wanted to meet the visitors, why did Lot respond, "Don't do this wicked thing?" (Gen. 19:7). And if the men wanted to extend a warm greeting, how can they be accused of inhospitality?

The sin of the Sodomites was not inhospitality but homosexuality. Even though the word homosexuality is never used, the fact is clear. Those who insist on denying the sin of homosexuality for the Sodomites, are quick to point out that the word *yadha* appears in the Old Testament 943 times and in only 14 (ten of them are in Genesis) of these occurrences does it mean "to have sex." What is not mentioned is the fact that this same word is used by Lot to make the offer of his daughters to the men of Sodom. Hoping to appeal to their sexual desires, he states that they have ". . . not been known by a man" (Gen. 19:8). Literally, they have not had sex. Certainly, in these words we can see some kind of sexual encounter.

The sexual encounter suggested in this text is best described by Jude as "sexual immorality and perversion" (Jude 7), due to the fact that it is contrary to God's plan. It's no surprise that Jude writes, ". . . they serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire." In its most graphic sense, the behavior of the men in Sodom was a violation of God's plan for humanity. Throughout God's Word he has made it clear that to lie with a man in the same way that a man is supposed to lie with a woman is detestable in the sight of God (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). It is detestable because it seeks to do that which can only be done with a woman, namely, become one flesh, be fruitful and multiply! Obviously, this can never happen, because God created man and woman and they only can carry out fully what he has designed.

Rebellion against God's design

In rebellion against God's plan, humanity has sought to do that which literally "suppresses the truth" (Rom. 1:18). By living in a way that is the ultimate departure from God's plan, man shows the level of his sin. Paul writes in Romans 1 that God's wrath is revealed against man's sin by allowing him to do what he pleases. And one example of this departure on the part of man is same-sex unions, an act that Paul calls "unnatural." This label does not mean that the practice of homosexuality (Romans 1:26; lesbianism too, which is mentioned in this text) is unnatural in the sense of feeling, but unnatural because it is against the nature of God's created order and serves as an example of how far men and women will go in their defiance of God and his ways.

Some have tried to suggest that homosexual practice is the worst of all sins. I would be hard-pressed to prove this. However, it is a sin that God hates due to the ruin it can bring to the lives of those who practice it. In Romans 1:23-26, Paul describes three kinds of exchanges that illustrate man's pursuit of his fallen nature: 1) the worship of God is exchanged for idols (v. 23); 2) the truth about God is exchanged for lies (vs. 25); 3) natural relations are abandoned for unnatural ones (vv. 26-27). For Paul, those who practice these sins receive "in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (v. 27).

Like the men of Sodom, their lives can only lead to destruction, either here or in the kingdom to come. In our society today, homosexual practice is bringing a harvest of bitter fruit. According to some of the latest figures I've seen, homosexual men are six times more likely to have attempted suicide than heterosexual men. Between 25% and 33% of homosexual men and women are alcoholics (the national average is 7%). Currently, 70% of Americans with AIDS are male homosexuals or bisexuals.

How should we respond?

Today, members of the homosexual community and their allies seek acceptance for a lifestyle contrary to the nature of God's creation. They seek to turn a moral issue into a civil rights issue as they seek minority status. They seek the right to adopt children, stopping at nothing in an effort to circumvent God's plan.

It's not surprising that the church is beginning to find the homosexual on its doorstep. The question is simply, "Is the door open or closed?" In the first century, the church in Corinth, a city filled with pagan practices, found itself ministering to people from all kinds of social backgrounds. On one occasion, as Paul was exhorting the Corinthians on their obligation to live worthy of the gospel, he reminded them of the types of people who will not inherit the kingdom of God. In his list he included the homosexual (1 Cor. 6:9), but what follows his statement is more important. Paul continued by saying, *"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Cor. 6:11).

What is God saying through Paul?

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When was the last time you sought to bring the gospel into contact with a homosexual? Is it possible that we sing about the power in the blood but don't really believe it?

Mission Moments

Looking Forward in Asia

IF THE LORD tarries, people will look back on April 18-21, 1994, as a significant milestone in the development and expansion of Advent Christian world missions. Those are the dates of the Asian Strategy Conference which will bring Advent Christian leaders from Japan, India, the Philippines, Malaysia, New Zealand, and North America together to pray, dream, and plan together for the future of Advent Christian missions in Asia. Never before have our senior missionaries, national leaders, and mission leadership met together for these purposes. In fact, most Advent Christian national leaders have never met their counterparts from other fields. In that context, this conference is a giant step toward building an Advent Christian awareness and fellowship in Asia.

Editor's Note: With this issue, we begin a new monthly feature written by Director of World Missions Harold Patterson. Rev. Patterson will focus on what God is doing through Advent Christian missions as well as discuss where we're heading in missions as we approach the twenty-first century. If you have something relating to missions that you would like Rev. Patterson to address in this column, please contact the editor at P.O. Box 23152, Charlotte NC 28227.

A partnership in missions

This Asian Strategy Conference is crucial for three important reasons. First, by holding it, we recognize the growing maturity of our national conferences in Asia. Our mission fields have grown and matured. Advent Christian churches in each of our Asian fields are making significant contributions to the expansion of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the leaders we have in each of our Asian conferences are gifted and anxious to play a major role in the future of Advent Christian missions.

Holding this conference also recognizes the growing partnership that Advent Christian missions seeks with our national churches in reaching their nations and reaching other Asian countries with the good news of God's love. Partnership means that the conferences and the mission will work together to share people, resources, and ideas to do a better job in reaching Asia for Jesus Christ.

Finally, this conference represents a strategic turning point for Advent Christian World Missions. Our mission seeks to place the church planting and outreach ministries of Advent Christian missions in Asia in the hands of our national conferences and their leadership. True to our disciple-making commitment, we want to help our national conferences develop a passion for world evangelism and outreach. And we want to assist in the training of future pastors, evangelists, and even missionaries on our foreign fields through strengthening our Bible schools. This year, our Penny Crusade theme focuses on the work of these training schools. That's a key part of our future ministry on our Asian fields.

Already, we're seeing a desire among many of our national churches in Asia to send their own missionaries to other Asian countries. As mission director, I want to listen to their vision and their dreams for what Advent Christian congregations in Asia can do to touch lives for Jesus Christ.

A sense of mutual respect

Part of the conference program will involve having each delegate from India, the Philippines, New Zealand, Japan, Malaysia, and North America share what God is doing in their work and what they see for the future. And

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It's All Right to Dream Again

Max Lucado

YOU KNOW how you can read a story you think you know and then you read it again and see something you've never seen?

You know how you can read about the same event 100 times and then on the 101st you hear something so striking and new that it makes you wonder if you slept through the other times?

Maybe it's because you started in the middle of the story instead of at the beginning. Or perhaps it's because someone else reads it aloud and pauses at a place where you normally wouldn't and POW! it hits you.

The God of surprises strikes again.

You grab the book and look at it, knowing that someone copied or read something wrong. But then you read it and well-how-do-you-do. Look at that!

Well, it happened to me. Today.

Only God knows how many times I've read the resurrection story. At least a couple of dozen Easters and a couple of hundred times in between. I've taught it. I've meditated on it. I've underlined it. But what I saw today I'd never seen before.

What did I see? Before I tell you, let me recount the story.

It's early dawn on Sunday morning and the sky is dark. Those, in fact, are John's words. "It was still dark. . ." (John 20:1).

It's a dark Sunday morning. It had been dark since Friday.

Dark with Peter's denial.

Dark with the disciples' betrayal.

Dark with Pilate's cowardice.

Dark with Christ's anguish.

Dark with Satan's glee.

The only ember of light is the small band of women standing at a distance from the cross—watching (Matt. 27:55).

Among them are two Marys, one the mother of James and Joseph and the other is Mary Magdalene. Why are they there? They are there to call his name. To be the final voices he hears before his death. To prepare his body for burial. They are there to clean the blood from his beard. To wipe the crimson from his legs. To close his eyes. To touch his face.

God is watching. For all you know right at this moment he may be telling the angel to move the stone.

They are there. The last to leave Calvary and the first to arrive at the grave.

So early on that Sunday morning, they leave their pallets and walk out onto the tree-shadowed path. Theirs is a somber task. The morning promises only one encounter, an encounter with a corpse.

They didn't quit

Remember, Mary and Mary don't know this is the first Easter. They are not hoping the tomb will be vacant. They aren't discussing what their response will be when they see Jesus. They have absolutely no idea that the grave has been vacated.

There was a time when they dared to dream such dreams. Not now. It's too late for the incredible. The feet that walked on water had been pierced. The hands that healed lepers had been stilled. Noble aspirations had been spiked into Friday's cross. Mary and Mary have come to place warm oils on a cold body and bid farewell to the one man who gave reason to their hopes.

But it isn't hope that leads the women up the mountain to the tomb. It is duty. Naked devotion. They expect nothing in return. What could Jesus give? What could a dead man offer? The two women are not climbing the mountain to receive, they are

going to the tomb to give. Period.

There is no motivation more noble.

There are times when we, too, are called to love, expecting nothing in return. Times when we are called to give money to people who will never say thanks, to forgive those who won't forgive us, to come early and stay late when no one else notices.

Service prompted by duty. This is the call of discipleship.

Mary and Mary knew a task had to be done—Jesus' body had to be prepared for burial. Peter didn't offer to do it. Andrew didn't volunteer. The forgiven adulteress or healed lepers are nowhere to be seen. So the two Marys decide to do it.

I wonder if halfway to the tomb they had sat down and reconsidered. What if they'd looked at each other and shrugged, "What's the use?" What if they had given up? What if one had thrown up her arms in frustration and bemoaned, "I'm tired of being the only one who cares. Let Andrew do something for a change. Let Nathaniel show some leadership."

Whether or not they were tempted to, I'm glad they didn't quit. That would have been tragic. You see, we know something they didn't. We know the Father was watching. Mary and Mary thought they were alone. They weren't. They thought their journey was unnoticed. They were wrong. God knew. He was watching them walk up the mountain. He was measuring their steps. He was smiling at their hearts and thrilled at their devotion. And he had a surprise waiting for them.

At that time there was a strong earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, went to the tomb, and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on the stone. He was shining bright as lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The soldiers guarding the tomb shook with fear because of the angel, and they became like dead men.

(Matthew 28:2-4)

(Now, read carefully, this is what I noticed for the first time today.)

So the women could see in

Why did the angel move the stone? For whom did he roll away the rock?

For Jesus? That's what I always thought. I just assumed that the angel moved the stone so Jesus could come out. But think about it. Did the stone have to be removed in order for Jesus to exit? Did God have to have help? Was the death conqueror so weak that he couldn't push away a rock? ("Hey, could somebody out there move this rock so I can get out?")

I don't think so. The text gives the impression that Jesus was already out when the stone was moved! Nowhere do the Gospels say that the angel moved the stone for Jesus. For whom, then, was the stone moved?

Listen to what the angel says: "Come and see the place where his body was" (v. 6).

The stone was moved—not for Jesus—but for the women; not so Jesus could come out, but so the women could see in!

Mary looks at Mary and Mary is grinning the same grin she had when the bread and fish kept coming out of the basket. The old passion flares. Suddenly it's all right to dream again.

"Go quickly and tell his followers, 'Jesus has risen from the dead. He is going into Galilee ahead of you, and you will see him there'" (v. 7).

Mary and Mary don't have to be told twice. They turn and start running to Jerusalem. The darkness is gone. The sun is up. The Son is out. But the Son isn't finished.

One surprise still awaits them.

"Suddenly, Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings.' The women came up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Go and tell my followers to go on to Galilee, and they will see me there'" (vv. 9-10).

The God of surprises strikes again. It's as if he said, "I can't wait any longer. They came this far to see me; I'm going to drop in on them."

God does that for the faithful. Just when the womb gets too old for babies, Sarai gets pregnant. Just when the failure is too great for grace, David is pardoned. And just when the road is too dark for Mary and Mary, the angel glows and the Savior shows and the two women will never be the same.

Just when the womb gets too old for babies, Sarai gets pregnant. Just when the failure is too great for grace, David is pardoned. And just when the road is too dark for Mary and Mary, the angel glows and the Savior shows and the two women will never be the same.

The lesson? Three words. Don't give up.

Is the trail dark? Don't sit.

Is the road long? Don't stop.

Is the night black? Don't quit.

God is watching. For all you know right at this moment he may be telling the angel to move the stone.

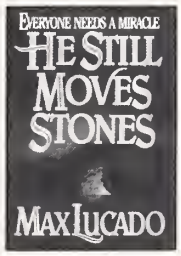
The check may be in the mail.

The apology may be in the making.

The job contract may be on the desk.

Don't quit. For if you do, you may miss the answer to your prayers.

God still sends angels. And God still moves stones. ❑



Max Lucado's most recent book He Still Moves Stones, *from which this article is excerpted, is published by Word Publishing. Copyright © 1993 by Word Publishing and used by permission.*

What's Cooking in the New Age Kitchen?

Part One

Previewing the Menu

Editor's Note: New Age thinking continues to expand in Canada and the United States. Its impact affects a wide range of organizations and professions. With this article, we begin a five-part series by Andy Bjorklund focusing on the teachings and practices of people and organizations associated with the New Age Movement. Part two will dig deeper into the historical roots of the Movement to gain a greater sensitivity to its dynamics and influence on our nation. In part three, we will contrast the New Age perspective with the teachings of Scripture.

AFTER THE appearance of *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* by Constance Cumbey in 1983 came a flurry of evangelical interest in the New Age Movement. Although the subject triggered an assortment of publications from both Christian and secular sources, some people have mistakenly classified the New Age phenomenon as a passing fad. One's perception can be easily altered by variations in media exposure and the normal distractions of everyday life.

Assuming that the New Age Movement is a passing fad, however, is a hazardous choice. New Age ideas, practices, organizations, and recruitment are continuing to gain ground globally. Its related belief system is embracing major sectors of humanity and has overshadowed the personal spirituality of millions of people. Its tenets are so appealing that even Christians are attempting to mix it with their personal walk of faith. To demonstrate the persistent influence of the New Age Movement, we will examine three major indicators: media, the marketplace, and organizational growth.

> New Age ideas, practices, organizations, and recruitment are continuing to gain ground globally.

Who's watching whom

A survey of popular magazines in the last five years provides a well-textured assessment of the New Age impact. Some of the more frequent categories of articles report on holistic health trends across the nation, the New Age influence on business management training, the penetration of New Age values into environmental issues, and the enduring pulse of the channeling craze. Still more articles examine the expanding markets for New Age goods (such as healing crystals) and power encounters (sometimes called shamanistic ritual).

To make the visual message more pronounced we can find a continuing New Age presence in the television and film industries as well. Although the popularity of Shirley MacLaine and her 1987 *Out On a Limb* television series may seem like history to our prime time memories, new faces like Marianne Williamson have ascended to entice the public eye. Williamson has gained greater notoriety for the promised benefits of the Course in Miracles curriculum. Her endorsement by Oprah Winfrey has been a boost for the New Age campaign of acceptance. Not all New Age promotions in video and film are as noticeably direct. Corresponding ideas have also been woven into the character dialogue, plot motifs, and climatic

messages of fictional productions as well.

New Age terms are creeping into common use as reflections of their popularity and acceptance. They can also serve as measurements of how saturated your own community has become with the New Age perspective. Have you met anyone recently who made reference to *left (or right) brain thinking, higher self, unlimited potential, global community, sacred earth, divine reality, values clarification*, or *past life experience*? Moving from specific terms to more revealing expressions, have you also heard anyone saying, *all paths lead to God, your truth is not my truth*, or *we create our own reality*? The more urban your location, the more likely that you have. But even the Arizona rancher has too if he met those roving tourists in search of the nearest psychic energy vortex.

Cosmic consumerism

Another indicator of the New Age Movement's impact on mainstream America is the marketplace. A major urban center like Seattle, Washington, provides ample evidence of the profitability of New Age pursuits.

> Although the traditional Eastern mystical quest focuses on the elimination of self through union with the One, the New Age path is one of self improvement.

Through a variety of retail outlets, customers can find direct access to New Age housewares, healing supplies, magic supplies, literature, recordings, art, and similar products to enhance their lifestyle. What was once considered as underground, or even kinky, is now energetically pursued by well-educated, affluent, and professionally-oriented shoppers.

The intensity of New Age activity in a given community can be further assessed by the number of sympathetic periodicals. Once again, Seattle provides fertile examples. One of its most widely circulated tabloids, in the 60-page, 11 x14 format, maintains momentum with the help of over one-hundred regular display ad enterprisers. Together they offer varied forms of divination, channeling, psychic counseling, occult hypnosis, yoga activities, bioenergetic healing, human potential seminars, pagan encounters, and more. This degree of sustained market activity strongly suggests that the New Age influence is more than a passing fad for a marginal percentage of the population.

New Age coming of age

Although the networking strategy has been utilized in many professional disciplines, the New Age crowd employs it with exemplary vigor. The number of allied organizations listed in nationally distributed New Age directories reaches into the thousands. With the proliferation of these organizations comes an expanding enthusiasm to advance the New Age agenda worldwide. Some organizations exist specifically for the implementation of the idealized global community. Others are more focused and choose to promote the New Age agenda within a specific sector of human society such as education, politics, business, science, health care, or the arts. Still others may not declare a New Age identity by name, but still contribute greatly to the Movement by supporting the commonly held beliefs and efforts of their allies. Such is the networking concept in motion.

The New Age Movement is also demonstrating its cultural influence through large public gatherings in a variety of forms. Some of the events are local in scope, but the more ambitious producers have toured nationally with their shows. Have you seen any advertising for a *Whole Earth Exposition, ESP/Psychic Fair, Whole Self Festival,* or *Body, Mind, Spirit & Earth Exposition* in recent years? One of the most memorable events was the *World Peace Event & Harmonic Convergence* on December 31, 1986 when thousands of people were organized nationwide. Together they invoked the *universal energy* to bring about a New Age version of global reform.

What are the ingredients?

Defining the New Age Movement is difficult because it is so diverse. It encompasses a wide variety of beliefs, persuasions, practices, organizations, and campaigns. You can expect to find considerable variation in belief and commitment between different New Age participants. Certain common ideas, however, frequently emerge. The more involved a person is with New Age activity, the more likely that you will encounter one of the following expressions.

All is One: Everything that we perceive as existing is really the same substance in its most reducible form. We are all a part of everything around us and each other.

The One is God: This substance that is shared by all things is actually a divine substance. God is actually the sum total of all that exists.

We are divine: If everything is God, so are we. Hence, we have infinite potential for personal transformation.

Human intellect is an obstacle: The traditional tools of inquiry such as logic and the scientific method are inferior for assessing reality. The mystical and intuitive approach is favored as more reliable.

> The New Age confidence in our divinity asserts that we have no limits. The seed for such a deception began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4-5).

Reality is created by your mind: While all things are connected, the spiritual realm is on a higher level of existence than the physical realm. The latter is a reflection of the former. We can alter our surroundings with the right application of mental and spiritual techniques.

Truth is relative: The reliable parameters of absolutes do not exist. Change is the only thing that is certain. The definition of values, principles, and even morality are rooted in the individual's own experience.

All paths lead to God: As no religious truth can qualify as superior in the realm of relativity, the apparent contradictions between religions are classified as illusions.

Humanity is entering a new phase of evolution: When the human race awakens to its inherent divinity, greater advances will be achieved. An enlightened global community will be able to overcome all its problems, and progress to higher levels of existence.

How does it taste?

This collection of fundamental beliefs is addressing the same primary concerns that most religions attempt to explain. What is the nature of the universe that surrounds us? Why are we here? Where are we going? How do we get here?

The New Age response is far from original as it repeats the monistic and pantheistic views that are prevalent in the esoteric philosophy underlying occultism and classic Hinduism. Consequently, the chief New Age explanation for our troubled planet is our ignorance of our divine nature. Although the traditional Eastern mystical quest focuses on the elimination of self through union with the One, the New Age path is one of self improvement. The Western substitute found in the New Age Movement advocates for the retention of individual identity and continuing advancement. Spiritual techniques then become the focus for individual salvation. The New Age confidence in our divinity asserts that we have no limits. The seed for such a deception began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4-5). The New Age quest is not so new. ❑

Andy Bjorklund is a veteran observer of pseudo-Christian and non-Christian religious movements including the New Age Movement. He and his wife Pauline live in Seattle, Wash. This is his third series for the Advent Christian Witness.

Missions Watch

David McCarthy

Steven and Ann Lay (Japan): The Lays enjoyed their first Christmas in the new mission house in Ono City and, on January 9, began holding bilingual services at this location. The services combine practice in English conversation, followed by Bible readings, Christian songs, personal testimonies, and Christ-centered messages in both English and Japanese.

Since early fall the Lays have been holding services in Uozumi attended by fifteen students on a regular basis. They include a physician, an engineer, a Buddhist priest, a government official, and several businessmen and full-time students.

Prayer Pointer: Pray for the bilingual services held in Ono City and Uozumi. Also remember the conversational English being conducted by Stephen, Ann, and BethAnn.

Beryl Joy Hollis (India): Beryl Joy reports that seven new believers were recently baptized at the Palani church, a city where an important Hindu temple is located. Authorities in local government do not have much sympathy for Christian work in their area.

Prayer Pointers: Pray for hindrances to be overcome in gaining facilities for churches and in making needed repairs to existing structures damaged by storms. Pray also for new converts who are being baptized in our churches throughout India.

Austin and Dorothy Warriner (Japan): The Warriners will officially retire as missionaries on June 30, concluding thirty-four years of service on the Japan field. They returned to the United States at the end of 1993 and are currently visiting Advent Christian congregations in the southern U.S. Watch for them to visit your area and let them know how much you appreciate their work overseas.

Prayer Pointers: For God's protection as the Warriners travel extensively in the South and in New England.

Ruth Soucier (Japan): Ruth appeared on Japanese television to describe what an American Christmas is like. Last December, the segment was aired six times. She will continue to teach English classes through the end of May when her three years of work as an associate missionary in Japan will be completed.

Prayer Pointers: Pray for Ruth to have opportunities to share her faith in the English classes and through natural conversations with her Japanese friends. ❑

Misfortune's Solution

Whenever misfortune comes our way,
And it seems difficult to pray,
Remember God is ever near
And waits for all a path to clear.

He is the greatest source of cheer;
He takes away each doubt and fear.
It is a joy to walk with him
And often have with him a talk.

His love exceeds the deepest woe
And all may ever to him go.
His comfort is beyond compare,
He waits with all his love to share.

He e'er can conquer every foe
And set each trusting heart aglow;
So as the years go slipping past
Be sure his love will ever last.

—C.W. Temple, "the Poet Parson"

Mission Moments

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during the conference, the presidents of each of our national conferences will meet together with myself and our General Conference leaders as we seek to forge ties for the future. We will become aware of each other's burdens and pray together for God's answers to our needs and concerns.

I'm hopeful that this conference will provide the visible framework for a new cooperation among Advent Christians in Asia. Before long, we hope to appoint an Asian director who will present Advent Christian missions to our national churches in Asia and also relate to our Asian missionaries. The Asian Conference will allow our General Conference leadership to see missions through the eyes of our Asian national believers.

We live in a changing world. Our expectations are not so much for new programs but for a sense of fellowship, mutual respect, and partnership in the task of reaching men and women, boys and girls throughout Asia for Christ. If we finish the conference with an attitude that says, "Truly, the Lord is with us, and now we have a greater vision for what he wants us to do together," we will have succeeded well. And we'll give God the glory for it's only through his power that we can accomplish his work. ❑

—Harold Patterson

Stop Doubting and Believe

THE FAMILIAR story of "Doubting Thomas" recorded in John 20:19-31 focuses on the disciple who failed to believe in Jesus' resurrection. But why did he fail to believe and why do we so often fail to believe today? As we reflect on this story, we may see that Thomas' failures and the attitudes behind them are also all too familiar.

Thomas may have suffered from a touch of a common ailment in society today—rampant skepticism. Everyone needs a healthy questioning attitude as protection from the deceit, con artists and scams all too common in the world around us. But skepticism can go too far and develop into a critical, disbelieving attitude in which everyone and everything is automatically discounted and discredited. This is the mindset that says "show me" but, in truth, refuses to be shown anything. How limiting to have only yourself as sole judge of reality and truth—seeing and hearing only what you want to and missing out on so much that is good, beautiful, and *real*.

Or perhaps, Thomas suffered from the "It's too good to be true" syndrome. This mindset is closely linked to a low self-esteem which leads to the belief that "nothing I want can happen; nothing I would like to be true can be; nothing good in my life can list because I don't deserve it." Thomas *wanted* Jesus to be alive. Surely he would love to see the One he had spent the past three years of his life with, the One who was his master, teacher, and friend! But he couldn't believe that the resurrection had actually taken place. It was too good to be true.

Also evident in Thomas is some of the all too common attitude that says "God has to do things my way or I won't believe in Him." In John 20:25, Thomas says, "Unless I see. . . I will not believe it." Believing is more than a matter of being convinced by the evidence and reaching a conclusion. It's also a matter of choice, a matter of the will. Thomas said, "I will not believe." There is a real sense in which we can choose to open or to close our

She Finished Well

She began the Lord's pathway
with the faith of a young teen
but as the years went by
that faith grew beyond all boundaries.

She finished well.

The way wasn't always easy,
in fact, sometimes it was real tough:
ridicule,
frustration,
hurt,
even loneliness at times.
Yet, she remained on course
and kept her eyes on the prize.

She finished well.

She wasn't famous or wealthy in any way
but from her lips came praise,
from her heart came love,
from her actions came God's touch
and her smile real hope.

She finished well.

Thank you my sister,
Thank you my friend,
May I learn from your example
and remain faithful to the end.

She finished well.

Written in memory of Darlene Rigney by Brad Rigney. Brad is pastor of First Advent Christian Church in Santa Cruz, Calif.

minds to the truth.

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis defines faith as being the "art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods." Thomas had believed in Jesus to some degree or he would not have been one of his disciples. But now Jesus is dead and Thomas gives into his feelings of grief and disappointment and does not open himself up to the greater truth—that the one he had believed and trusted in is alive again.

Then there's the magnitude of the test of Thomas' faith. How many of us would readily believe reports of a present-day resurrection?

Why believe?

Let's approach this gospel story from another direction and ask ourselves, "Why should Thomas have believed?" What evidence did he have on which to base his faith? What rational basis did he have to believe in Jesus' resurrection?

First of all, Thomas had the witness of the miracles that Jesus had performed before going to the cross. And he had this witness on a first-hand basis. He had actually seen the many and varied healings Jesus had performed; he had seen Jesus feed thousands of people with a few loaves of bread and a few fish; he had even seen Jesus call Lazarus forth from the grave!

Thomas also had the promise of God himself. As a Jewish boy, he had been taught the Word of God as revealed in what we now call the Old Testament. He had heard Jesus teach and preach, expanding on that Word. Jesus himself had taught Thomas that he, the Messiah, needed to die on the cross; that he would rebuild the temple—his body—in three days; that he would return to establish his kingdom. Thomas had the witness of God's Word.

Finally, Thomas had the eyewitness testimony of the other disciples. They said, "We have seen the Lord!"

next page

My Pilgrimage

Knowing God's Fullness

Linda Leavitt

A RECENT conversation stirred me once again to the realization of what a struggle I have had with the concept of the fatherhood of God.

Perhaps I can best illustrate my struggle and confusion by sharing with you an event that took place when I was six or seven. My brothers and sisters and I did not go to Sunday school or church very often. Only on rare occasions, when my grandmother would decide we needed it, would she and her friend drive out to the country and take us to services. This was a special treat, and we children looked forward to it with great awe and anticipation. Those grand stained-glass windows were my favorite!

One particular Sunday we were all dressed and ready early as we awaited our ride. There were four of us children at the time and one was on the way. I'm sure my parents' patience was tried as they got us ready, and, of course, there were the usual sibling squabbles and confusion. I recall that a squabble started over a rocking chair and teddy bear that belonged to my three-year-old brother. (All of us loved that little chair and frequently disagreements arose over who would be the next to use it.) My little brother had gone to the kitchen for a drink, and in his absence my older brother and I scrambled to see who would get the chair first.

When Jay returned, we both asked him if we could use it. Unknown to us at that time, Jay whispered to us both that we could play with it! Of course, this created mass confusion and prompted a knock-down-drag-out between me and my older brother. As my father entered in to referee, he asked which one of us did our little brother actually say could use the chair. And, of course, we both replied, "Jay told me I could use the chair!" When Dad asked our younger brother which one of us he told could use his chair, he said he couldn't remember (and to this day he still claims amnesia!) What followed, though, was not comical at all.

My father was prone to fits of anger and rage. Perhaps it was the years of alcohol abuse, although at that time Dad had not been drinking. But when Dad could not get us to confess to our lie, or so he thought, he promptly took my older brother and I to the bedroom. After demanding we take our clothes off and lay across the bed, he removed his belt and began hitting us, telling us he was not going to stop until one of us told the truth. As both of us were telling the truth, we continued to get hit until there were deep welts up and down our backside.

While he hit us, we were also told that if we could not tell the truth, then we were not going to be allowed to go to church, ever again, because God did not want children in his church who were liars. My older brother cried out that he hated both my father and God because they were so mean, and neither God nor my father loved us anyway! In my own heart and mind I secretly agreed, but my brother's words were enough to start the beat-

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These are men that Thomas had spent a lot of time with. Surely he should have believed his friends!

But despite all the evidence—the things Thomas himself had seen and heard, the teachings of Jesus, the witness of God's Word and the testimony of his own friends, Thomas did not believe. It was just too much!

What evidence do we have?

But what about us today? Aren't we just like Thomas? Don't we also fail to believe despite the evidence available to us?

Like Thomas, we have the witness of the miracles of Jesus. We may not have actually seen Jesus in the flesh as Thomas did, but we do have the written record of Jesus' miracles in the gospels. John 20:30-31 says that Jesus also performed many other miracles but these were recorded so we might believe and receive eternal life as a result. The purpose of the Bible is to lead us to faith, to convince us that Jesus is real, so that in believing, we can have eternal life.

Like Thomas, we have the testimonies of others who believe in Jesus. We have the witness of others living today that testify of God's work in their lives. We also have the witness of some of our friends and acquaintances who are more than happy to share that Jesus has made a real difference in their lives. And we have something that Thomas didn't have. We have thousands of written testimonies of Christ's followers in the centuries of history that have transpired since Jesus' resurrection.

There are other witnesses available to us in the world of nature that surrounds us. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). It's all around us! Paul says in Romans 1:19-21, "For what can be known about God is plain to them [and here Paul is speaking of those who refuse to acknowledge God—it is plain to them], because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. . ." The world around us points us to the reality of the Creator if we open our eyes to it. In the spring, we see flowers come forth and bloom. They are bright and beautiful in their rebirth after the cold and seeming death of winter. This revival each spring can remind us of the resurrection of Jesus in the past and the future resurrection of those who believe in him.

Faith: the "art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods."
—C.S. Lewis

We also have the witness of the Holy Spirit whom God has sent into the world to reveal Jesus to us. Jesus said in John 16:13, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." The Holy Spirit of God is available to us. Jesus has sent him to us. He will come to us and live in our hearts when we turn to God in faith and repentance.

What keeps us from trust?

Each one of us needs to hear and take to heart Jesus' command to Thomas: "Stop doubting and believe." What is it that keeps us from trusting in Jesus? Are we still waiting for a lightning bolt from heaven to convince us beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is real? And even if that lightning bolt came, would we believe even then?

In the parable Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), Abraham answers the rich man's request to send someone to give a warning to his brothers, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced if someone should rise from the dead." And the real irony of that story is in John 11:45-46, where we see the reactions of those who witnessed the raising of Jesus' friend Lazarus from the grave three days after death. Some of the witnesses believed in Jesus but others who had seen the same event reported the incident to the Pharisees. They refused to believe in Jesus even when they saw this mighty miracle of God with their own eyes.

Hasn't each one of us already seen and heard enough to know that Jesus is real? He is the One who can set us free from sin, especially the sin of unbelief. Jesus said to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). That's a special blessing we can share in today. We don't have to fall victim to out-of-control skepticism. The blessings of God are not too good to be true and we can have a part in them.

But we must not wait for God to do things our way before we believe in him. His ways are so much better! God's ways lead to forgiveness, peace with God, resurrection, eternal life, and the eternal kingdom to come. Let's not cling to our demands or try to fit God into our little box. Instead cling to the One who loves us fully and completely, the One who gave his life for us.

Thomas wallowed in sorrow and grief after Jesus' death but we can look up and see the glorious new day that has arrived.

Notice how Thomas responds to Jesus' invitation to "stop doubting and believe." When Thomas, the same one earlier referred to as "Doubting Thomas," is confronted by the living Lord Jesus, he pronounces one of the strongest statements of faith recorded any-

where in Scripture. He cries out, "My Lord and my God." Face to face with the risen Christ, Thomas recognizes the implications of Jesus' resurrection to perhaps a greater degree than the other disciples. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead makes him more than friend and teacher; it makes him Lord and God. We, too, can overcome doubt and emerge from the struggle strong and victorious in faith.

The struggle can be powerful when we experience times of testing. There may be some issues that we still struggle with. Perhaps we, like the father of the demon-possessed boy, need to say to Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). And God is able to help us. He can handle our honest questions as we commit them to him. And when we look to our glorious, living Lord, we can join in Thomas' great affirmation of faith and cry out, "My Lord and my God!" ❑

This article is revised from a sermon Mary Roller preached at First Advent Christian Church in Charleston, W.Va., where her husband serves as pastor. She serves as Christian Education secretary at First Presbyterian Church in Charleston and sings with the West Virginia Symphony Chorus.

God's Fullness continued from page 19

ing of us all over again.

That event has long since past, but the memory of what my father did, and said, has replayed in my mind countless times. And often I have wondered how my father, and God, could be so cruel and unloving.

Even though I have come to know God through his Son, my Savior, Jesus Christ, I have still struggled with the concept of God the Father. I have had little problem with accepting and embracing the other aspects of who God is. But when I think of him as my Father, reflecting on what I knew my father was like, I quickly come to a stumbling block.

Fortunately, God has been loving and patient with me. And he has brought many people into my life who have helped me to get past the "father" barrier, and to move into a greater knowledge of who my heavenly Father is. I can't help but wonder, though, how many others struggle as I have. And because of some past experience in their own lives, they are being kept from knowing God in his fullness. May I encourage you to be honest with yourself, and with God. Allow him to show you if there is an area where, in some aspect, you have shut him out.

"*And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God*" Eph. 3:17-19. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

June

1 Praise God for funds raised to support Advent Christian mission work through the annual **Penny Crusade** emphasis.

2 Many **Advent Christian camps** are finalizing their summer programs. Pray that lives will be touched for Jesus Christ at adult, youth, and children's camps across Canada and the United States.

3 Praise God for teenagers who have sensed God's call to serve with **short-term mission** and **outreach ministry projects** this summer.

4 Pray that God will continue to call **Advent Christian young people** to consider Christian vocations in pastoral ministry and missionary service.

5 As tensions continue in Liberia and Nigeria, pray that God will bring **peace** among the people of those troubled nations.

6 Praise God that Advent Christians in **Liberia** and **Nigeria** continue to proclaim the gospel message despite the hardships they face.

7 Pray that God will give strength to Christians in nations where **religious freedom** is not guaranteed.

8 Pray that **Beryl Joy Hollis**, **Barbara White**, and **Marion Damon** will experience God's joy and peace as they serve him today in India.

9 Pray that God will lead a couple to consider career missionary service in **India** with Advent Christian missions and that he will make it possible for them to enter that nation for service.

10 Praise God for the students training for pastoral and church planting ministry through the **School of Evangelism** in India.

11 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they serve the Advent Christian congregation in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

12 Pray that God will give strength and discernment to the General Conference senior staff: **Brent Carpenter, Millie Griswold, Dave Ross, Harold Patterson,** and **Bob Mayer**.

13 Pray for **Alberto Gomez** as he provides pastoral leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in the El Florido area of Tijuana, Mexico.

14 Praise God for the Christian commitment of **Tecate Bible Institute** students and pray that God will use them to reach many in Mexico for Jesus Christ.

15 Pray for God's guidance as Advent Christian missions seeks to employ national workers in **Mexico**.

16 Praise God for his leading in opening a new Advent Christian mission field in **Honduras**.

17 Pray that as the Honduran field is opened, God will provide workers to **proclaim the gospel** there.

18 Pray that God will give wisdom and direction to the five regional superintendents: **Marshall Tidwell, Richard Thurston, Larry Withrow, W. James Smith,** and **Clinton Taber**.

19 Praise God for students studying for Christian ministry at **Oro Bible College** in the Philippines.

20 Pray for **Filipino** Advent Christian pastors as they communicate God's love to the people they come in contact with.

21 Pray for Advent Christian missionaries serving in the Philippines: **Harry and Etta Soucy, David Vignali,** and **Margaret Helms**.

22 Pray for Christians in **Malaysia** who face the threat of arrest and jail for sharing their faith with Muslims.

23 Pray that God will touch lives for Christ through the work of Advent Christian missionaries in Malaysia: **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam; James and Mercy Devadasson,** and **Ruth Devairakkam**.

24 As Steven and Ann Lay return home for furlough, pray that the congregation they are planting will continue to grow.

25 Praise God for the opportunities that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** have had to share the work of Advent Christian missions with local churches while on deputation.

26 Pray that God will supply the necessary funds to enable **Karen Rigney** to begin her career service with Advent Christian missions in Japan this summer.

27 Praise God for the work that **Floyd and Musa Powers** continue to do in service to Advent Christian missions during their retirement.

28 Pray that God will strengthen **your pastor** as he communicates the Word of God and works to provide direction for your church.

29 Pray that the Lord will strengthen and encourage **Advent Christian pastors** in Canada and the United States as they face the pressures and stresses of pastoral ministry.

30 **Praise God** that our salvation is a gift of God's grace and that we receive it not through any attempts we make to please him but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Bible Teaches continued from page 10

David Roper puts it this way: "Homosexuality is no more wrong than any other sin. When it comes right down to it, there's no fundamental difference between any of us. Only the incident of temptation is different. Given the right incentive we all fail—voluntarily, and repeatedly. Bad habits develop, gather strength and enslave us. If God were to unilaterally and comprehensively judge sin, who could stand?"

He's saying that there's hope for the homosexual. Just as a person can *choose* to dishonor God by practicing homosexuality, a homosexual can honor God by being washed (allowing God to clean up his/her life), sanctified (allowing God to set him/her apart as his holy vessel), and justified (allowing God to change his/her opinion of us based on our acceptance of the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus). Can a homosexual change? Yes, with God's help. And through the compassionate ministry of God's people, the church, the homosexual can find new life in Christ.

Is the church willing to be the hand of Christ that reaches out to people trapped in sin? Is the church willing to look beyond the sin of homosexual practice long enough to reach homosexuals with the gospel of God's that can change their lives? When was the last time you met a former homosexual in your local church? Not lately? Could it be because you have given up on the power of the gospel to save? Hopefully not! When was the last time you sought to bring the gospel into contact with a homosexual? Never? Is it possible that we only sing about the power in the blood but don't really believe it? Listen to these words:

> Would you be free from your burden of sin?
> There's power in the blood, power in the blood!
> Would you o'er evil a victory win?
> There's wonderful power in the blood!

This is the gospel, even for the homosexual. It's up to churches to let them know. No longer can we point a finger in disgust at homosexual people and forget that therein lies a person who Jesus died for. From now on we must no longer look at people with the eyes of the world (2 Cor. 5:16), but rather through the compassionate eyes of Christ. If we want to follow Jesus, we must walk as Jesus did (1 John 2:7). If we want to follow Jesus we must be willing to touch those who no one else will touch. If we want to follow Jesus we must love those whom Jesus loved, even if that person is a homosexual. ❑

Sam Warren is pastor of the West Jacksonville Advent Christian Church in Jacksonville, Fla. He received the doctor of ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1993.

Learning to Overcome

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had no idea how to do that.

There's a whole lot of change in the process as we deal with the issues and attitudes that come up. My attitudes towards men, towards women, towards the church have changed dramatically.

In our society, women seem to have an easier time expressing feelings and emotions. But men have been taught to suppress them. Does that make the recovery process different for men than for women?

Rick: In some ways. Men are not supposed to be feeling people according to our culture. And generally, people who struggle with homosexuality are more sensitive and more aware of their feelings. That's not always true but is often the case. Artists and musicians are often people who have these kinds of struggles.

They look at themselves as not meeting up to the so-called male standard and they feel like they're not masculine. But a man needs to realize that he is a masculine person and learn to develop and encourage his masculine side. He can begin to say, "I really am a man."

We can name several organizations that articulate a "gay-affirmative" position both in the church and in society. In their view, homosexuality is a natural and acceptable life and those who disagree are labeled bigots and hatemongers. How successful are these organizations in defining the debate on homosexuality that we're having within the United States?

Rick: They've been very successful. They're outspoken; they have money, and they have a purpose. In addition, they have the support of the media and are beginning to get support from many churches. In our country, if you speak loudly, people will listen. If you have money, you can gain influence through the media.

The trouble I see is that anyone who does not agree with them becomes the enemy. Our ministry becomes the enemy because we're teaching that people can change. But that stands in opposition to what they teach. We're saying that we need to take responsibility for what goes on in our lives. They're saying there's no need for responsibility for change because this is the way I should be. It's not a matter where we can look for a compromise because these are two opposite viewpoints and attitudes.

You've led into my next question. Organizations like Crossroads, Recovery House, and Exodus International are politically incorrect in our society. But how do we as Christians who want to be faithful to what the Scriptures teach and be compassionate toward people respond to the political agenda of "gay-affirmative" organizations?

Linda: First, people and leaders in our churches need to educate themselves about the issues surrounding homosexuality and begin to address this issue. We've not done a good job with that.

The ministries that Rick and I work with want to help Christians understand those issues and how they can help people. It's time for Christians to get busy and address these issues in an unconditional, loving way.

Rick: The purpose of our ministries is not to promote political agendas. We're not here to oppose what other people are doing. We're in existence to bring health, healing, and encouragement to people wherever that needs to take place. If people want that, we're here to provide it.

Our task is not to go out and beat people over the head and say, "You're wrong and you better shape up!" We're here to give help to people.

Linda: We're not saying that change is easy! It takes a commitment and a real desire to turn away and walk in a different direction. That's not instant.

So parents, spouses, and loved ones of people involved in homosexuality need to understand that change is not only a process, but a difficult one.

Linda: Very much so.

Rick: A very difficult process. But if you look at life, the better things are not the easy things, but the things you have to work at. Those become more valuable to you. And if you work on the problems and issues you have and make some progress, that becomes a valuable thing.

Linda: It's not so much that we struggle in terms of acting out homosexual behavior. I have not thought of doing that in a long time. Our struggle is knowing who we are, loving ourselves, and loving Jesus. ❑

Editorial

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and see our Lord's response to the Samaritan woman with five husbands and to the woman caught in the act of adultery. He spoke the truth about their lives in a way that communicated his love and mercy. Ed Dobson's right. Our churches should be places where homosexuals and all of us sinners can hear about a God who loves us and offers us forgiveness from sin, healing, and hope through Jesus Christ. ❑

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June 1994

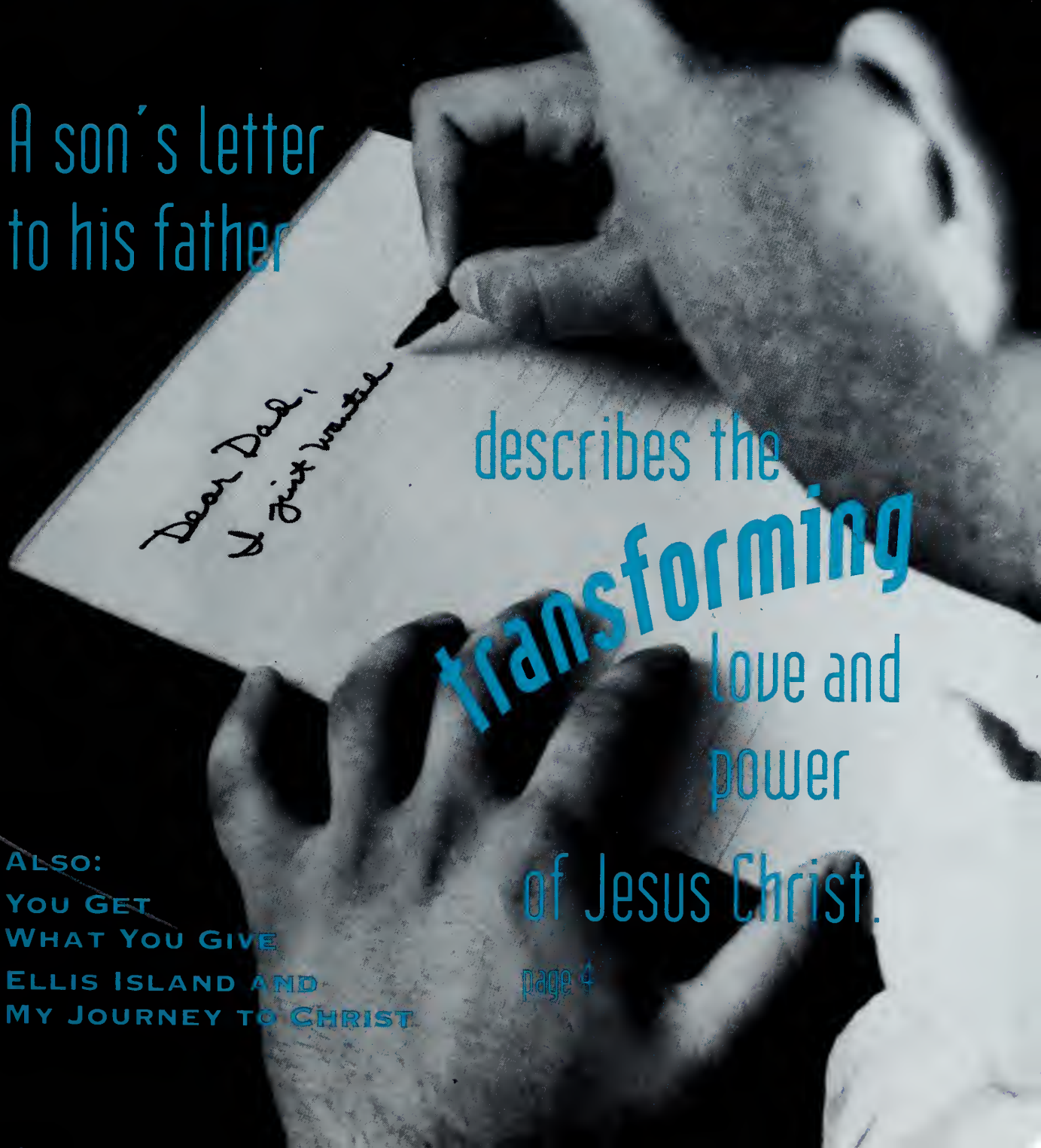

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photo illustration by Jim and Mary Whitmer

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Tough Words From a Compassionate Woman

EVERY YEAR, the National Prayer Breakfast comes and goes with little fanfare and hardly any press attention. It's an opportunity for some (not all) politicians and bureaucrats to pay token homage to a God they mostly ignore the rest of the time. Earlier this year, the usual important people were on hand for the festivities.

But this time, something different happened. The press coverage was no different than usual. But when the organizers invited Mother Teresa to speak to the assembled dignitaries, I wonder if they knew that the stage had been set for a prophetic confrontation to rival the Old Testament encounter between Nathan and David. When it comes to compassion, Mother Teresa practices what she teaches. For many years, she's walked the streets of Calcutta, India, caring for people discarded by society. And though small in stature, Mother Teresa stands as a giant example. She embodies the words of Jesus' charge to his followers to provide food for the hungry and care for the sick.

> "The greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion."
> – Mother Teresa

With the President and the First Lady sitting a few feet away, Mother Teresa declared her belief that "the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child." And in any country that readily accepts and encourages abortion, "how can we tell other people not to kill one another?" Our growing acceptance of the violence of abortion has desensitized us to the value of human life. We feel no sense of urgency as young people kill each other on the streets of our cities. We wink at the senseless slaughter on the streets of Sarajavo. And we turn our backs on the pain and suffering of our children, both unborn and born. "Leave me alone" has become our new national motto.

We should all ponder Mother Teresa's words to the dignitaries that morning; "Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion." We tend to think about problems and issues in isolation and miss how they relate to each other. We separate abortion from illegitimacy, from gang violence, from drug abuse. But Mother Teresa reminds us that those things are interconnected. When we encourage violence in one aspect of our public life, it's not long until we become desensitized to violence in general. The gathered politicians squirmed a bit I'm sure as she pointed that out to them.

And I'm sure most of them are busy trying to forget the words of that soft-spoken nun. How ironic that this woman from the east European nation of Albania would come to remind us that the United States is a nation that until recently has always articulated a high regard for human life. (Though the practice of slavery early in our history rightly casts doubts on our willingness to apply that standard.) "If we remember that God loves us," in Mother Teresa's words, "and that we can love others as he loves us, then America can become again a sign of peace for the world. From here, a sign of care for the weakest of the weak—the unborn child—must go out to the world. If you become a burning light of justice and peace in the world, then really you will be true to what the founders of this country stood for."

Her words make me uncomfortable. I bet they made the President and the dignitaries uncomfortable as well. Maybe all of us need to be made more uncomfortable so that we'll finally start saying "no" to a culture that talks about peace but encourages abortion, conflict, and violence. ❑

Dear Dad, My Life Has Changed

I'M NOT SURE where to begin. I'll warn you up front that as I write, my penmanship will degrade.

Hopefully, you've had a chance to read *Classic Christianity*. I can honestly say that it gave me the spiritual insight to salvation that I have been needing for such a long time. I think it's important for you to hear what God's been teaching me during the last few weeks. It's been life changing and I'm anxious to share it with you.

As you know, a year ago I began to regularly attend church. This I attribute to a loving wife who knew better than I what was best for me. I began to sense the Lord working in my life. I was being drawn to God because of the needs in my life that were not being met. My relationship with God was developing on a purely emotional level. I made some significant advances in my basic beliefs based on my emotional experiences.

But I'm sure you already know, Christianity based solely on emotions only lasts as long as the emotions. I began to realize this about six weeks ago. My tears during touching songs were no longer as strong as they used to be. I began losing touch with the pastor's message by Monday morning. I even found myself daydreaming in church—not in tune with worship. I didn't notice it at first, but I was doing what I have always done. I was a Sunday morning Christian. But by midweek, I was "the military guy."

Fortunately, the Lord began to point this out. I began to sense many of the same guilty feelings that drove me from God many times prior in my life. I no longer was experiencing emotional satisfaction from my Christian faith, and my motivation was weak. The Sunday before I left for my base assignment, I did something I haven't done in many years. The pastor asked for those who wanted special prayer to come forward. Pride and fear had always kept me from being able to do that. But that day, I came to a point where I could not ride a spiritual roller coaster any longer. I was either going to begin a deep-rooted faith or I was going to quit kidding myself. I went forward that day with a special prayer on my heart. I needed to meet Jesus—not emotionally, but spiritually. The events during the week following that Sunday were typical. No incredible change, no profound vision, or remarkable insight.

> *I have never been so completely* **alive.**

I headed off to my base assignment concluding that I had not found any new spiritual direction. I was put into a class with thirty other guys from all over the world. And after another week, I had all but forgotten about my special prayer two weeks earlier.

That was about to change. I was invited to play golf in Monterey, California, and found that I would be driving by myself because the other two guys had a pickup truck. Late Friday night, I got a phone call asking if I'd give a fourth player named Mike a ride. "No problem," I said.

The next day I drove two hours with Mike and in our conversation, we stumbled over the topic of Christianity. Not knowing or wanting to let Mike know that I was struggling with my own faith, I played along and put on my best Christian face. Through the years I've gotten pretty good at pulling that old Christian face out whenever I needed it.

But, soon after, I would realize that meeting Mike was no accident! The next day I found out that Mike and I were to be instructor candidate buddies. In other words, we were matched up in pairs within the school and Mike and I were put together. That night, I told Mike that I was going to the on-base theater to see a movie. He asked to join me and we both went. For some reason, we both showed up in front of the theater about thirty minutes prior to showtime. Mike was wearing a Christian shirt—"Touched by the Master." I commented on it and he mentioned that I could get one at the local Christian bookstore. He happened to be going

The Roar

Max Lucado

THE DOOR is locked. Deadbolted. Maybe even a chair under the doorknob. Inside sits ten knee-knocking itinerants who straddle the fence between faith and fear.

As you look around the room, you wouldn't take them for a bunch who are about to put the kettle of history on high boil. Uneducated. Confused. Calloused hands. Heavy accents. Few social graces. Limited knowledge of the world. No money. Undefined leadership. And on and on.

No, as you look at this motley crew, you wouldn't wager too many paychecks on their future. But something happens to a man when he witnesses someone who has risen from the dead. Something stirs within the soul of a man who has stood within inches of God. Something stirs that is hotter than gold fever and more permanent than passion.

It all started with ten stammering, stuttering men. Though the door was locked, he still stood in their midst. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

And send them he did. Ports. Courtyards. Boats. Synagogues. Prisons. Palaces. They went everywhere. Their message of the Nazarene dominoed across the civilized world. They were an infectious fever. They were a moving organism. They refused to be stopped. Uneducated drifters who shook history like a housewife shakes a rug.

My, wouldn't it be great to see it happen again?

Many say it's impossible. The world is too hard. Too secular. Too post-Christian. "This is the age of information, not regeneration." So we deadbolt the door for fear of the world.

And as a result, the world goes largely untouched and untaught. Over half of the world has yet to hear the story of the Messiah, much less study it. The few believers who do go out often come home weary and wounded, numbed at the odds and frustrated at the needs.

What would it take to light the fire again? Somehow, those fellows in the Upper Room did it. They did it without dragging their feet or making excuses. For them it was rather obvious. "All I know is that he was dead and now he is alive."

Something happens to a man when he stands within inches of the Judaean Lion. Something happens when he hears the roar, when he touches the golden mane. Something happens when he gets so close he can feel the Lion's breath. Maybe we could all use a return visit. Maybe we all need to witness his majesty and sigh at his victory. Maybe we need to hear our own commission again. "Will you tell them?" Jesus challenged. "Will you tell them that I came back. . . and that I am coming back again?"

"We will," they nodded. And they did.

Will you?

From No Wonder They Call Him the Savior, *by Max Lucado. Copyright © 1986 by Multnomah Press/Questar Publications. Used by permission.*

there the next day, and I agreed to go. Not only was Mike a Christian, he was more than a Sunday-morning Christian. His shirt told me that he was willing to take a stand for his faith throughout the week. If that wasn't enough, this guy knew of and was going to a Bible bookstore. I never would have gone out of my way to do that. Why should I? I already owned a Bible.

A spiritual awakening

So we went. I was impressed with a couple of T-shirts, went to the counter, and bought them. While I was waiting for Mike to find what he wanted—he pointed out several good books on the shelf. Unimpressed, or better put, unmotivated, I didn't see anything that caught my eye. Then I saw Max Lucado's *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior*. I opened it and read the last chapter entitled, "The Roar."

Dad, if you haven't read it, stop now and go do it. I found myself standing there, tears running down my face. Jesus was speaking to me through those words. He was pushing my emotional button—a button that I hadn't activated in several months. I bought the book. Then I ran across *Classic Christianity* by Bob George. The message on the back cover hit home. "What is it that's missing?" Words like unfulfilled and disappointed; statements like "going through the motions" touched my heart. I bought it too.

That night I began to read Max Lucado's book. I found myself in tears as I read each page. I was seeing for the first time a Jesus that I had never seen before. As I read, I would get on my knees and thank God for his Son. I'm convinced it was more than an emotional experience. I was having a spiritual awakening. I read Max's words until it was late and the last page was finished.

I had met the Savior like never before! I understood for the very first time his unconditional love for people. I had my first glimpse of God's Spirit and my first encounter with his grace. Grace was something I never understood. Max's book brought me to the Cross and introduced me to Jesus. For

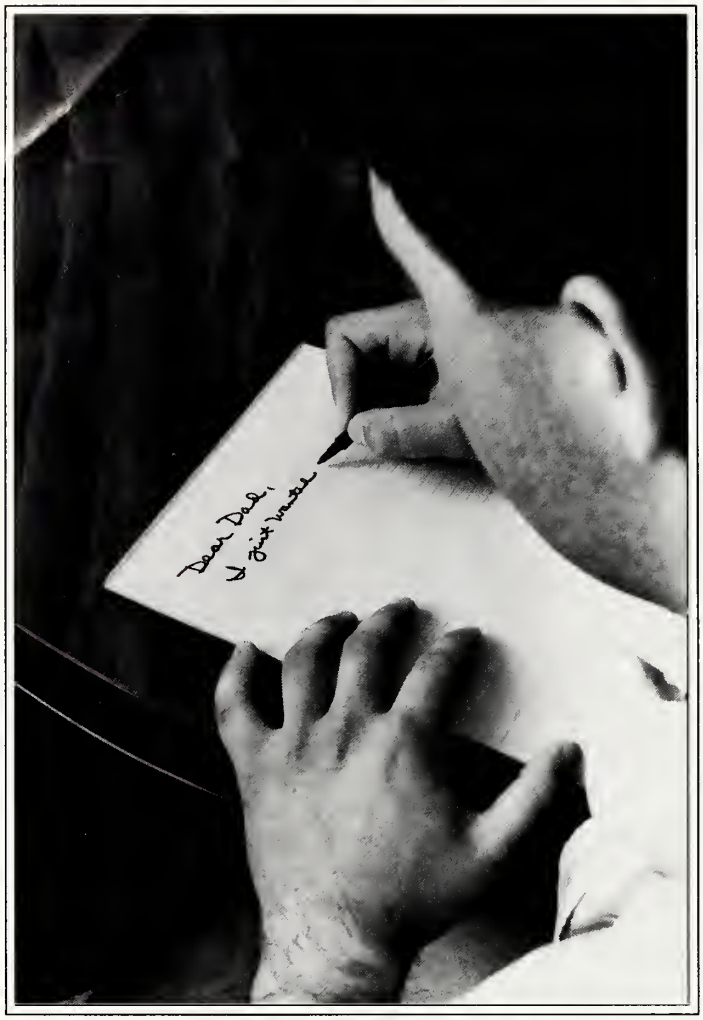


photo illustration by Jim and Mary Whitmer

the first time in my life, I was having a spiritual encounter with my Creator. It was then and is now more than my heart can contain. I have never been so completely alive.

Then the Lord led me to read the other book I bought, *Classic Christianity*. The first two chapters were tough. But by the fifth chapter I found myself on my knees thanking God for this direction. Every chapter left me sobbing—not tears of sadness but of unequaled joy.

I began to discover the gospel of Jesus. For the first time, I understood spiritually who Christ is. I understood the significance of his resurrection. I saw how the Cross took sin out of the equation and how his resurrection gave me the opportunity to have his Spirit living inside of me. I again discovered grace and felt like a tremendous burden was lifted off my shoulders. I'm acceptable to God. The living Spirit of Christ Jesus touched me. And I realized that my special prayer had been answered.

I shared all this with my friend Mike. You see, Mike was used by God—handpicked to lead me to salvation. I would never have made it with just any Christian. God knew that I needed a good listener—a man with strong convictions. A man who knew the Scripture well enough to deal with my questions. God sent in Mike a friend who knew how to deal with a "type A" aggressive personality, who could match me step-for-step intellectually, but who would not turn me off or put me on the defensive. God sent me a disciple who was willing to cry. And sent me a friend so the Holy Spirit could direct where the books left off.

I've begun to see things differently, and I have found myself reading the New Testament with a passion that I've never known. Hours of reading go by. I've read Scripture that never made sense to me, and yet now it's so plain and so applicable that I can't get enough. Before, I always tried to make myself acceptable to God and I hopelessly failed. I found it easier to stick my head in the sand than to face my failure. But now I'm a new creature! I'm acceptable to God—unconditionally. I understand that while my spirit is dead—separated from God—only through Christ's Spirit living in me can I be made alive.

Dad, I've discovered that when your spirit changes, your perspective changes; when your perspective changes, your priorities change; and when your priorities change—then the way you work, the way you think, the way you love, and the way you deal with people around you changes. Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free!" And he declared, "I'm the way, the truth, and the life."

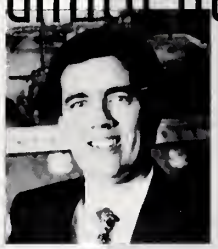
The opposite of the truth is error. I knew nothing but error. The opposite of life is death. I was spiritually dead. I have found "the way, the truth, and the life." I have come to God through Jesus. I believe the Gospel. I understand forgiveness of sin and why it's so important to be justified before God. I understand the Resurrection and the role that God's Spirit plays in our lives. I understand the living water, the woman at the well, the virgin birth, the law of Moses and its direction to the Cross of Christ. I'm discovering the Scriptures like I was reading them for the first time. I now know the difference between an emotional experience and a spiritual one. My life has been changed and I'm a "new creature" in Jesus Christ!

Thank you for loving me and thank you for your prayers. You never gave up hope for my salvation. You wanted a lot of things for me—but none more important than my knowing and loving Christ Jesus. I know now that I will walk the corridors of God's kingdom with my heavenly Father and my earthly father. I will never be separated from either of you—that makes me happier than words can express. Thank you for being a Christian. Thank you for guiding me in the ways of our Savior. Thank you for your unconditional love.

I don't know what God has in store for me. Right now, I am content with continuing to change spiritually. Continue to pray for me. Thank God for his patience and grace for your son. "Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be men of courage, be strong. Do everything in love." ❑

This letter is addressed to an Advent Christian pastor from his son.

Family Builder



What Teens Want to Hear

William Batson

MARK TWAIN'S VIEW of the teenage years often strikes a chord of agreement with parents. He proposed that a teenager be stuffed into a barrel. Then the cover would be nailed shut and the young person fed through the knothole on the barrel's side. At age sixteen, in Twain's view, the knot should be plugged shut.

The adolescent years are challenging for parents and teens. I should know. I'm the parent of two terrific teens. One of the most challenging aspects of our relationship is communication. I thought being a former youth pastor would help me in talking to my girls. NOT!

"Dad, you don't understand!" Sure I do. I was a teenager once. And I used to be a youth pastor. "Yeah, but that was way back then. It's different now!" Those dreadful words: *way back then*. Is it that different? Do our teens want to hear from us radically different messages that we wanted to hear or not hear from our parents?

What teens actually hear

A survey of over 800 teenagers (from *How to Talk So Your Teenager Will Listen* by Paul W. Swets) reveals that things may not have changed as radically as we think. Their responses when asked what they really wanted to hear from parents, are not unfamiliar. Here are a few:

- Go have fun!
- We'll buy you a car when you're sixteen—and pay for the insurance!
- You don't have to take out the garbage anymore.
- Be in whenever you feel like it.
- I love it when your room is messy!

What do teens actually hear from their parents? Their responses are revealing, reflecting the daily conflicts that can make being home a hassle for all. Here are some of the classics:

- You had better get good grades or you will mess up your entire life!
- Turn off the TV. Go to your room and study.
- When I was your age. . .
- Get off the phone!
- Because I said so, and that's final!

As a parent, an authority figure, I may have the right to say some of these things. The penetrating questions I must examine is: "Am I being the most effective in strengthening my relationship with my daughters and increasing our level of positive communication?

What they most want to hear

When questioned about what they most wanted to hear from their parents, five responses leaped off the pages crying out for us to listen. The first is: *I'm proud of you!* Remember how good it felt when your parents said these words. Maybe they rarely told you and you remember how that felt. A thirteen-year-old girl says of her parents, "I want to hear them say that I'm a great daughter, I'm just what they wanted, and they're proud of me." During the teenage years, parental approval is perhaps most important to our teens because it is key to their forming an identity and building a healthy self-image.

The second message they want to hear from us is: *You can always come to me with anything and I'll be there to listen*. A fifteen-year-old boy says, "If I knew my parents would really listen to me, I would tell them how much I love them and appreciate them. I would tell them I know they work hard." To hear these words from your own flesh and blood would make all the sweat and tears fade into oblivion. Four rules for talking to your teen can promote success at this point:

- Give your undivided attention.
- Don't talk when you're trying to listen.
- Don't ridicule.
- Listen with a willingness to understand.

Understanding, trust, and love

I understand you or I want to understand" is the third most important thing teens want to hear from parents. Let your son or daughter know that you want to understand, even when there is a difference of views. Strive to ascertain all the motives and desires behind a certain problem or request before forming an opinion. When all else fails, ask your teen to help you understand.

Message number four says, *"I trust you."* Eighteen-year-old Paul says, "The most damaging thing my parents ever said to me was when they told me they could never trust me again." Trust is risky. It can mask inappropriate behavior from an un-

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You Get What You Give

God's blessings com

Bill O'Connor
Newberg, Ore.

NO FARMER would be so foolish as to plant sugar beets hoping to raise a crop of potatoes. It would be ridiculous to plant corn expecting to harvest a crop of wheat. Anyone planting the seed of one plant hoping to raise a crop of another would be labeled naive at best and a fool at worst. Yet, in the field of human and spiritual relationships we're often just that foolish. We sow one attitude and expect to reap another. Spiritually we sow wild oats and expect to reap the wheat of blessing.

Twentieth century believers are not the first to act so foolishly, of course, for the apostle Paul warned his readers in Galatia of the same problem in the first century: *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows"* (Galatians 6:7). What Paul simply says is that you can't play games with God and get away with it. You can't plant one crop and hope to reap another. He was pointing out to the Galatians, and now to us, that there is a basic ebb and flow to life; a principle of seedtime and harvest; a standard of investment and return; a law of giving and receiving that will not be set aside.

You get back what you put in

Simply put, this law says that you will get back from life as much as you put into it. That's true of life in the natural realm and in the spiritual realm. It's true in relationships. It's true everywhere.

People who get promotions, for instance, are people who do the job to their employer's satisfaction. And the ones who advance quickly are those who not only satisfy the employer's expectations but exceed them. They get what they give.

People who have many friends are people who show themselves friendly. They don't wait for others to come to them and offer love and encouragement, they give love and encouragement to others and reap a harvest of love and encouragement in return. Those who complain that they're lonely and have no friends have usually made little or no effort to develop friendships.

People whose spiritual lives flourish are people who put some time and effort into their own spiritual development. They read God's Word, pray, maintain a devotional life, attend church, share their faith, and enjoy Christian fellowship. Why should anyone be amazed to see spiritual progress? Others sit back and wait for God to zap them into maturity and can't understand why nothing is happening. They don't sow any seed. Therefore, the harvest never comes.

Even more tragic are those who ignore the basic principles of Christian living entirely and then wonder why their lives are producing a harvest they never planned to reap. Paul gave us the answer to their dilemma long ago when he penned, *"The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life"* (Galatians 6:8). It's so simple when you see it, yet so easy for some to miss.

Our lives mirror our attitudes

What a difference this simple principle makes. It literally impacts every waking moment. People feed back to us the same emotions they see on our

faces, the same tones they hear in our voices. A smile begets a smile, a frown begets a frown. Cheerful people find their world reflecting that cheerfulness. Grumpy people seldom see a ray of light breaking through the clouds. Life around us will often mirror our attitudes.

This may be part of what the wise man had in mind when he wrote, *"Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again"* (Ecclesiastes 11:1). In the ebb and flow of life, attitudes and actions have a way of returning to us like a piece of driftwood floating with the tide. As the saying goes, "What goes around comes around."

You reap what you sow. Neglect people and they will neglect you; pay attention and you'll receive attention in return. Meet the needs of those around you and they will meet your needs in turn; ignore their needs and they're not likely to notice yours either. Caring people are cared for. Loving people are loved. Giving people receive gifts in return.

And there's even more to it than that. You not only generate the response, you determine its size. Paul also writes, *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously"* (2 Corinthians 9:6). The Apostle was talking about stewardship, of course, but his words apply to every resource we possess. The generous giver reaps multiple blessings from the hand of God, the generous giver of self reaps multiple gifts from the hands of others. The more extensive the gift, the more extensive the blessing. The more you give, the more you get.

Getting, of course, is not the reason for giving. It's just one of the side effects. Selfishness stops the flow of the tide of blessing. A desire for personal gain blocks the ripening of the harvest. If you give for the sake of getting, the principle will not work. It's when you give for the sake of giving alone, with little thought of return, that blessings come your way. What you receive increases your ability to give. You don't give to get, you give to get to give. The more you receive, the more you will have to give away.

God's blessings, and the blessings of human relationships, come to those who willingly give themselves away. Both are withheld from those who withhold themselves. We must not be so foolish as to think we can sow hatred and reap love. We must not expect to sow discord and reap harmony. The apostle James says that *"Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness"* (James 3:18). That's an example of seedtime and harvest at work. Just like the world God created in which each living thing possesses its own seed within itself and reproduces after its own kind, like begets like in attitude and action.

A smart farmer plants big potatoes to reap even bigger ones. He knows that if he keeps the largest and saves the smallest for seed his crop will decrease in size every year. If, on the other hand, he uses the largest for seed, the harvest will increase year by year.

Be a smart believer. Plant lots of seed in terms of positive human relationships, and in terms of commitment and service to the Lord. The more you sow, the more you will reap. The more you give, the more you will get. Keep giving the harvest away and it will grow year by year, and each year you will have even more to give. ❑

those who willingly give themselves away.

Bill O'Connor, an ordained elder and evangelist in the Church of the Nazarene, is the founder of Northwest Christian Resource Service of Newberg, Oregon. He has twenty-eight years of ministry experience, and now specializes in providing resource materials for pastors and teaching congregational seminars on a variety of topics. His articles have been featured in over twenty Christian publications.

Family Builder

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doubting parent, or it can fortify a relationship by increasing the mutual level of confidence and openness. But it is indispensable for raising terrific teens. Trust boosts their self-image and gives them the feeling they are growing up.

The most requested message of all, according to the survey, is *"I love you."* Love is the foundation for healthy family relationships. Ken, age 13, says, "I wish my parents would say to me every day, not just every other day, that they love me and that they are proud of me." Seventeen-year-old Susan states, "I wish my dad would say 'I love you' more. I think he thinks I'd be embarrassed if my friends heard him, but I definitely would not." Our teens need to feel love communicated and demonstrated.

The adolescent years are seldom dull, but they need not be difficult. Incarcerating our teens in Mark Twain's barrel, no matter how enticing that may be, is not the way to deal with years labeled the "terrible teens." Remembering what our teens want most to hear from us offers a more rewarding relationship for both parent and teen. ❑

William Batson lives in Portsmouth, N.H., with his wife and two daughters. He is pastor of the Advent Christian Church and coordinates Family Builders Ministries.

Mama's Floor; Papa's Dinner

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Me.

ANYONE WHO has reached age seventy remembers the admonition frequently heard, "Don't track mud on my clean floor!" Sometimes Papa said, "Take off those dirty shoes—your mother has just mopped her floor." It was always Mama's floor, although we all walked on it. She had exclusive ownership of sink, dirty dishes, items to be washed, clothes to be mended. "That's your mother's mending"—although the woman did not have one sock in the lot!

On the other hand, dinner belonged to your father. "Come to the table before Papa's dinner gets cold." Papa also had a special chair. "Get out of your father's chair," was a frequent refrain. Papa also owned the newspaper. No one dared unfold it until he had read it.

Papa worked hard. The refrain that was sung in every house on our block was, "Poor Papa. You kids keep quiet; Papa is trying to get some rest." That from the mamas who just spent the day cooking over a hot wood stove, washing the families' dirty clothes by hand, and cleaning and ironing until dinner time.

In most houses babies were exclusively Mama's. She changed the diapers, took care of night feedings and washed the little critters. She was also the one that spoiled them. "You're spoiling that child, Mother!" However, Papa had the right to slip the children a bit of candy between meals and allow them to stay up an extra half-hour.

In our neighborhood everyone knew whose job was whose. The boys had lawns to mow and wood to chop. The girls had beds to make and dusting to do. Boys were supposed to have more meat and girls needed liver. We all knew where we stood!

When we fell in love—in love enough to want to live with a man—we got married. Marriage meant sex, and having babies at unpredictable and inconvenient times. It also meant desserts were made in the morning, meals were on the table on time, dishes were yours, laundry was yours, and the floor belonged to you. We were not all equally good at all those things, but our reputations as "good wives" depended on a well-run household.

After World War 2 many women had to help out by working outside the home. We chose jobs nearby so that we could be home quickly to start papa's dinner. We apologized for our job. It was often referred to as, "Something Mama likes to do to keep from being bored now that the kids are in school." No one heard of a family moving because Mama had a chance to go up the ladder in her career. Ladders belonged to fathers.

Changing times

How times have changed! Today the floor belongs to whomever is there to mop it. The kids can get the meals in the microwave and families almost never sit down to the table together. Men can change diapers as well as women; and boys can load the dishwasher as well as the girls. Babies come at more convenient times—or maybe never. Desserts are fattening and if papa decides to splurge, pies are bought at the bakery!

I heartily approve of shared labor at home. Of course Mama isn't the only one who uses the floor or the dishes. Why shouldn't papa share the joy of washing up the kids and walking the baby? Papa still works hard. He deserves a special chair—but so does mama!

But have you noticed how the divorce rate is climbing? How many of our children will be able to celebrate fifty years of marriage to one partner? It's a common achievement for my generation. Look in your local newspaper at all the golden wedding celebrations.

Fifty years of marriage does not mean fifty years of undiluted bliss. It does not mean that there were no disagreements—no bad times! But it does mean that two people were committed to making a marriage work. Papa and mama made an effort to be faithful to each other. Building a stable environment for the children was a number one priority.

> *The important thing in a good marriage is a strong belief on everyone's part that the marriage is holy and meant to last.*

Both women and men were willing to put aside the chance of personal fulfillment, a phrase so popular these days, for the good of the whole family. One person I know who celebrated his fiftieth year of marriage long ago said, "Perhaps if we had it to do over

again we might neither of us choose to marry the other. However, we've raised a fine family and that was what was most important to both of us."

Another friend told me that during one hard time in her marriage, one of her children came to her crying, saying she feared her parents would get a divorce. My friend answered, "It's true your father and I disagree about many things right now. We will work them out. There will not be a divorce." Then she added with a chuckle, "Murder, perhaps—but not divorce!"

A home where there is no disagreement probably means that one party is a sponge. Of course all those fifty-year people have had their bad years; but they've also had many good ones! Not all those women enjoyed mopping the floor. Nor did the men enjoy going off to work when they would have rather stayed home. Many of the women worked outside the home. But if job advancement meant putting a strain on the marriage, most of them sacrificed their careers for the good of the family.

Marriages that last

But "bound together in the bonds of holy matrimony" is not an idle phrase. Marriage tests us. It requires us to be bound together even when being free would be more fun. The issue is whether or not we believe our marriage is holy. Did we truly mean our wedding vows?

In today's family the division of labor is no longer as clear as when I started out. Families will have to decide who does what in their house, given their own peculiar timetable. Husbands and boys may have to share in the traditional women's work; but mama may need to take over some jobs that used to belong to papa. The important thing in a good marriage is a strong belief on everyone's part that the marriage is holy and meant to last. Such sacrifices that are necessary to hold the family together will need to

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Dear Fern:

I wanted to send you a note to thank you for all the time, energy, and prayer you have invested in me this past year. I'm still amazed at how God brought us together.

I'm sure that when I first came to you with my problems, they seemed overwhelming. I not only appreciate your willingness to listen, but also your ability to guide. You listened without judgment of those involved, and then, through questions and Scripture, helped me look at the whole picture and decide the best course of action.

Sometimes a desire to grow spiritually is not enough. I am ready and want the opportunity to show someone else the way. Thank you for showing me how.

Love, Jill

Please Show Me the Way

WHEN I RECEIVED this touching note of appreciation, I caught myself thinking, "Did I actually do all that?" I must confess, for a moment, I felt pretty satisfied on my self-imposed pedestal. However, as I basked in my moment of glory, the familiar, still, small voice reminded me "apart from me you can do nothing." Reality set in for this "ignoble vessel" and my heart was humbled before a God who can take something less than perfect and use it to accomplish his perfect will.

I decided to write a follow-up on "How Do Women Disciple?" (*Advent Christian Witness*, February 1994). Since Jill had been a recent disciple, I felt it would be helpful to share the philosophy that has defined my personal discipling style and worked well for me through the years. It's a simple statement: Discipling is putting a friend in touch with the resources that will bring about a bonding with the living Lord. Within this uncomplicated outline are three phases of walking through discipleship. They are friendship, resources, and bonding. Each emerges naturally into the next and always allows for God's timing as his spirit prompts and leads the discipling relationship. Let's take a look.

Friendship

Remember Jill's words? "I am still amazed at how God brought us together." She had been only a speaking acquaintance. She said "Hi" and I responded with, "How are you doing?" This is a question we don't want to ask unless we're willing to be burdened if the answer is tearfully "not so good." I asked my friend later why she opened up to me. She responded, "Fern, you are approachable and seemed to genuinely care."

You may be saying to yourself right now that there isn't enough time to get involved. If so, discipling will not occur because it is a purposeful decision to expend time and energy. Jill mentioned her problems. This early stage of discipling may or may not include help needed with immediate problems. However, in the words of Oswald Chambers, "To be a disciple means that we deliberately identify ourselves with God's interests in other people." The God I have experienced is interested in my problems and meets me where I am. I wanted to do the same for Jill. What an opportunity to love as Jesus has loved me.

Discipling friendship means listening, laughing, notes of encouragement, thoughtful questioning over lunch, phone calls. While all this is taking place, I'm discovering the spiritual interest and maturity of my friend. I'm also realizing, in this now safe relationship, I have created a great responsibility. The degree of my own relationship to God through Jesus Christ will determine my effectiveness from here on. My prayer is often, "Lord, it is you and me, and I pray it's mostly

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Ellis Island and My Journey

Mohammed "Mo" Khan
Santa Cruz, Calif.

AS A TEENAGER, standing on the deck of *SS Britanic* in 1954, I first glimpsed the Statue of Liberty and the New York harbor. "How wonderful these people must be to place a statue to welcome all those who come to their shores," I thought to myself. The Statue of Liberty was the symbol of my dreams. Ellis Island represented my freedom to start a new life. My thoughts constantly vacillated between hope and fear, hopeful for an opportunity to grow and fearful of what the future might bring.

I was assigned to an immigration and naturalization officer, who became my guardian angel. He accompanied me to Ellis Island. I was filled with excitement and anxiety upon entering the great hall where I would spend most of my five-day stay, waiting for my name to be called. It was difficult to sleep or eat, as everyone was caught up in the electric atmosphere of hope, fear, and wonder.

Most of the men in our sleeping quarters were like me: up before dawn, peering through the large, heavily screened windows to see the Manhattan skyline. In the evening, we could walk around Ellis Island to see the Statue of Liberty and the skyline at sunset.

A hub of activity

I was detained because my chest X-rays had been misplaced. My immigration and naturalization officer took me on the ferry and by taxi to the Department of Health in downtown Manhattan for new X-rays. The city seemed so crowded to me. I had never seen such skyscrapers. It was so exciting. I prayed to God that I would be allowed to remain in this country. The immigration and naturalization officer was extremely perceptive. He sensed my anxiety and always patted my shoulder in a reassuring way. The atmosphere in the city was electrifying with people of all races and nationalities. I was so impressed that on the U.S. currency the inscription read "In God We Trust."

The great hall was the hub of processing activity. It was there that I first saw a television set. Although most of us spoke little English, we communicated our deepest thoughts and when one was rejected there was a quiet which settled over the group. We found ourselves rooting for each other inwardly and this eased the tension of just thinking about ourselves. Suddenly we were caught up in a great drama, not knowing the ending. Many times I sat on the wooden benches and wondered what I would do if I were rejected. But there was always hope even when it bordered on despair.

Suddenly my dream was realized; I was accepted, the Statue had not turned her back on me. After five days of waiting, my name was called. I was elated and thrilled. At the end of my stay at Ellis Island, I accepted the top hat and the $50.00, which was traditionally given to all who passed through Ellis Island to America. I then proceeded to the airport by bus with my immigration and naturalization officer. My ticket from New York to California had been purchased in Karachi, Pakistan. In San Francisco I would join my grandfather who had been a farmer and had been in the States since 1912. My destination now was my new home in Willows, California. My future was unsure and I was to travel many roads, but I never lost the enthusiasm which I brought with me to the United States of America.

Little did I know that someday I would be a part of the National Park Service, which would reclaim Ellis Island. How proud I am to show my sons and share with them the deep gratitude I feel for my country and to my countrymen.

One of my most vivid memories was the hug given me by the immigration and naturalization officer at my departure at Idlewild Airport (now JFK). He had been my surrogate father for five days, during one of the most intense times of my life. He helped me set the stage for my positive thinking. Perhaps his parents or grandparents were immigrants, too. His name is lost to me, and I will always wonder what happened to him.

The more one gives to America the more one receives in return. The American dream can be a reality. Although I came in 1954 with different circumstances than those who came in the early 1900s, I am sure we all had one thing in common: *Hope*.

Sensing God's presence

When I immigrated to the United States from Pakistan in 1954 I was a believing, practicing Moslem.

During my first year in California, I met a friend who was the son of an Assembly of God pastor. My friend invited me to go to church with him several times. Eventually I consented to visit his church. After the sermon, there was an altar call but I did not go as I did not fully understand the implication of an altar call. On my third visit to the church I went to the altar to pray; I prayed in my own language (Urdu).

At this point in my life, I was simply asking God to show me the way. I suddenly heard a man praying beside me. He was not praying in English and I began to listen. Some of the words coming out of his soul were in Arabic. My tears started flowing. The more I prayed the more tears were flowing and I started to feel the presence of God. (I had never cried before in my adulthood.)

The feeling of closeness to God was present in my soul. This new awareness continued for a few months. One day while I was praying in Urdu, I suddenly started to speak in an unknown tongue and I was praising God and asking him to guide me to the truth. I felt the tremendous power of God.

Our pastor came over and put his hand on my head and he started praying with me. The more he prayed, the more I cried and I felt the divine power of God in my soul.

to Christ

After consulting with the pastor on several occasions, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and believed in him wholeheartedly. Two months later I was baptized. I am so glad that I accepted him as my Savior. Since that time Jesus has never let me down.

For me, converting was not such a difficult thing. A true Moslem does not worship the prophet Mohammed but does worship wholly the God of Abraham—the one true God. Accepting Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God and I embraced him fully. ❑

Mohammed "Mo" Kahn is active at First Advent Christian Church in Santa Cruz, Calif. For over twenty years he worked with the US Park Service. He and his wife Katie have two sons, both of whom serve in the US Armed Forces.

Mama's Floor continued from page 11

be made by each individual in the family.

There still has to be division of labor. There still must be a "head of the house." But the head of the house has a co-partner whose needs and strengths will need consideration. I honestly believe that today's Christian family needs to restore "eating around the table" at least one meal a day. I think that time must be set aside for worship on Sunday. Those two things are not easy to do with today's schedules. But they are both extremely important. The meal together can provide the ideal time for a bit of family worship and Christian growth.

There are many other suggestions that I could make. But the younger marriage partners will have to work out their own plans for preserving their own marriages. I pray there will be lots of fiftieth and sixtieth anniversary parties in the days that lie ahead. Times will be different but the important thing will be the same. The floor may no longer be mama's or the dinner papa's but here's hoping that there'll be a happy Christian family walking on the floor and eating at the table! ❑

Miriam Snow Priebe and her husband Charles have served together in ministry for many years and are active at the Advent Christian Church in Mechanic Falls, Me.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

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July

1 Praise God for the opportunity that Advent Christian conference leaders from **Asia** had to meet together in the Philippines for prayer and planning.

2 Pray that God's leading will be evident on each Advent Christian mission field in Asia—**the Philippines, India, Japan,** and **Malaysia**— during the coming months.

3 Praise God for the opportunities developing to open a new Advent Christian mission field in **Honduras**.

4 Pray that God will raise up a **new missionary couple** from Advent Christian ranks during the coming twelve months to serve in Honduras.

5 Praise God for lives being touched through the ministry of **Advent Christian camps** this summer.

6 Pray that **Penny Crusade 1994** will be the most successful ever.

7 Praise God for the ministry and congregation that **Alberto Gomez** continues to build in the El Florido district of Tijuana, Mexico.

8 Pray for **Tecate Bible Institute** as they recover from a fire that destroyed their storage building and caused a sizable loss.

9 Praise God for growing **religious freedom in Mexico** and pray that Christians in that country will be free to communicate the gospel to their family, friends, and neighbors.

10 Pray for God's leading as Advent Christian Missions seeks to employ **new national workers** for the Mexico field.

11 Praise God for the ministry that **Beryl Joy Hollis, Barbara White,** and **Marion Damon** continue to have as they train students and leaders in India.

12 Pray that God will raise up a **new missionary**

couple for Advent Christian work in India during the coming year.

13 Pray that Advent Christian congregations in **India** will be effective as their pastors and people communicate the gospel.

14 Praise God for forty years of Advent Christian mission work in the **Philippines**.

15 Pray for missionaries **Margaret Helms,** and **David Vignali** as they serve in the Philippines.

16 Pray that Christians in the Philippines will sense **God's strength** as they communicate the gospel in the face of opposition from Moslems.

17 Praise God that **Karen Rigney** has sensed God's call to career service as an Advent Christian missionary in Japan.

18 Pray that funds will be available soon for **Karen's support** and that God will touch lives for his kingdom through her ministry.

19 Praise God for the opportunities that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** have to continue to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions while on furlough this summer.

20 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they complete their first term in Japan and begin their furlough.

21 Praise God for the three years of service that **Ruth Soucier** gave as an associate Advent Christian missionary in Japan.

22 Pray that God will richly bless the work of Advent Christian congregations in **Japan**.

23 Praise God for the faith and courage that Christians in **Malaysia** display as they communicate the gospel under the threat of official persecution.

24 Pray for **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam, James and Mercy Devadasson,** and **Ruth Devairakkam** as they serve with Advent Christian missions in Malaysia.

25 Pray that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** will have many opportunities to communicate God's love to young people in the inner city of Memphis this summer.

27 Advent Christian pastors in **Nigeria** and **Liberia** continue to face political and social unrest. Pray that God will give them his protection and strength as they serve him today.

28 Pray for peace to come to the troubled nations of **Somalia, Liberia, Bosnia,** and **the Sudan**.

29 Praise God for some special people who serve Advent Christian missions: **Floyd and Musa Powers** and **Ed Whitford** in special projects; **Carlos Quintero** as Mexico field-superintendent; and **Cameron Ainsworth** as assistant for Urban ministries.

30 Pray that God will give strength and health to the staff at the **denominational offices** in Charlotte.

31 Pray that God's wisdom will be with the five **regional superintendents** as they serve Advent Christian congregations.

Show Me continued from page 11

you!" When my Christian walk is enthusiastic, genuine, and growing, I can have confidence based on the power of Christ in my life. But discipling is not only friendship. Jill needed more. She needed to be in touch with resources that would allow her to grow beyond exposure to my own expression of faith.

Resources

In friendship, it was easy to invite Jill to a Bible study, a woman's retreat, a worship service, or Sunday school. The goal here was to get her more involved in God's Word and the transforming power it promises. Does she have a Bible? Does she need help learning to pray? Has she been baptized? Has she recognized and implemented her spiritual gifts? Those are questions I keep in mind as our friendship grows. Each of these questions and others will determine what resources are needed to guide her toward spiritual maturity. Jill had already made a confession of faith, been baptized, and was attending worship but needed help as she untangled her confusion with life in general and how her Christianity related specifically.

We spent time with Scriptures that would help her understand. I must, as a discipler, never forget that God's Word is "the resource." Nothing is more valuable in her spiritual pilgrimage than familiarity with Scripture. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:12-13). This is the tool that could help her know Jesus' way and "decide the best course of action." Jesus said, "Learn from me."

Jill and I prayed together. The love I had given her was coming back to me as she often prayed for needs in my life. So we had begun to incorporate God's Word as a lifestyle. Is there more? Yes! Jill's note said, "Sometimes a desire to grow spiritually is not enough." In discipling, absorbing content leaves the Christian ineffective unless a transference takes place. I like to call it bonding.

Bonding

Bonding by definition is a connection that brings two people so closely together that they may be considered as one. During the friendship and resource steps, Jill and I were bonding together as friends in Christ. But unless I have at some point in this process taken her hand from mine and placed it in the hand of Jesus, I have failed to disciple. This "letting go" can be painful. However, when

next page

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Instead of taking for granted that we are called to deviate from the conventional only on specific issues—when, for instance, we face the abortion industry, or the pornography empires, or racism, or the drug trade—we must get it into our heads and hearts that we are called to be different constantly, and if I may put it this way, systematically. As Christ's disciples we march to the beat of a different drummer. Intellectually and imaginatively we must absorb the fact that our calling as Christians means becoming God's alternative society. Instead of thoughtlessly going with the world except when we have particular reason not to, we should see ourselves as summoned to think from scratch the Christian way to approach everything, and only go along with the world when we have particular Christian and biblical reasons for doing so.

—J.I. Packer in his address to the graduates and friends of Regent College, Vancouver B.C.

For there is a coarseness, a callousness, a cynicism, a banality, and a vulgarity to our time. There are just too many signs of de-civilization—that is civilization gone rotten. And the worst of it has to do with our children. Apart from the numbers and the specific facts, there is the on-going crime against children: the crime of making them old before their time. We live in a culture which at times seems almost dedicated to the corruption of the young, to assuring the loss of their innocence before the time.

—William Bennett

Social responsibility requires the doing of many things. We must aim to ameliorate suffering, to avert great evils, and to establish whatever modicum of justice is possible in a world grievously injured by sin. But, above all, the purpose of the Christian is to prepare the world for that day when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet and all creation declares, "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

—Richard John Neuhaus in Building the Free Society

The gospel of God's grace is a glorious upsetting of the balance, a turning in which the light rises and the shadows fall, though without disappearing, in which joy overtakes sorrow without extinguishing it, in which the Yea rings louder than the ever-present Nay.

—Karl Barth

"Sin" is a complex idea. It is too easy to focus attention on individual aspects of sin, and neglect as a result the fundamental idea. Sin is an underlying state of alienation from God.

—Alister McGrath in Intellectuals Don't Need God *and Other Modern Myths*

...if we don't have a sense of "lostness"—that those outside of Christ are truly lost—we are not going to reach them. The breakdown of the family, violence, sexual looseness, drugs, abortion, abuse, corruption, gambling, chronic alcoholism—that's being lost. Let's face it. We're a lost generation, yet we don't focus on it. We see America's problems more as political or sociological. We think Washington can cure them with more programs.

—Luis Palau in National and International Religion Report (8/9/93)

There's only one thing worse than a tyrannical government—anarchy.

—Charles Colson

Unfortunately, most of us spend our time and energy striving to be more, do more, achieve more, and become more. But we usually don't realize that these efforts are doomed to fail, often leaving us bitter, disappointed, and frustrated. The only way we will ever be fully satisfied is to accept God's provision or antidote for our sin—his gift of grace.

—John Westfall in Enough is Enough

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it occurred, she found confidence, peace, fulfillment, and most importantly the personal challenge to "Go, make disciples." One important teaching for Jill was that Jesus words were more than a suggestion. They were a command.

So we have come full-circle, from a personal perspective to a God perspective. Jill said, "Please, show me the way." Jesus said, "I am the way." Jill the discipled, now becomes Jill the discipler. . . for Jesus sake. ❑

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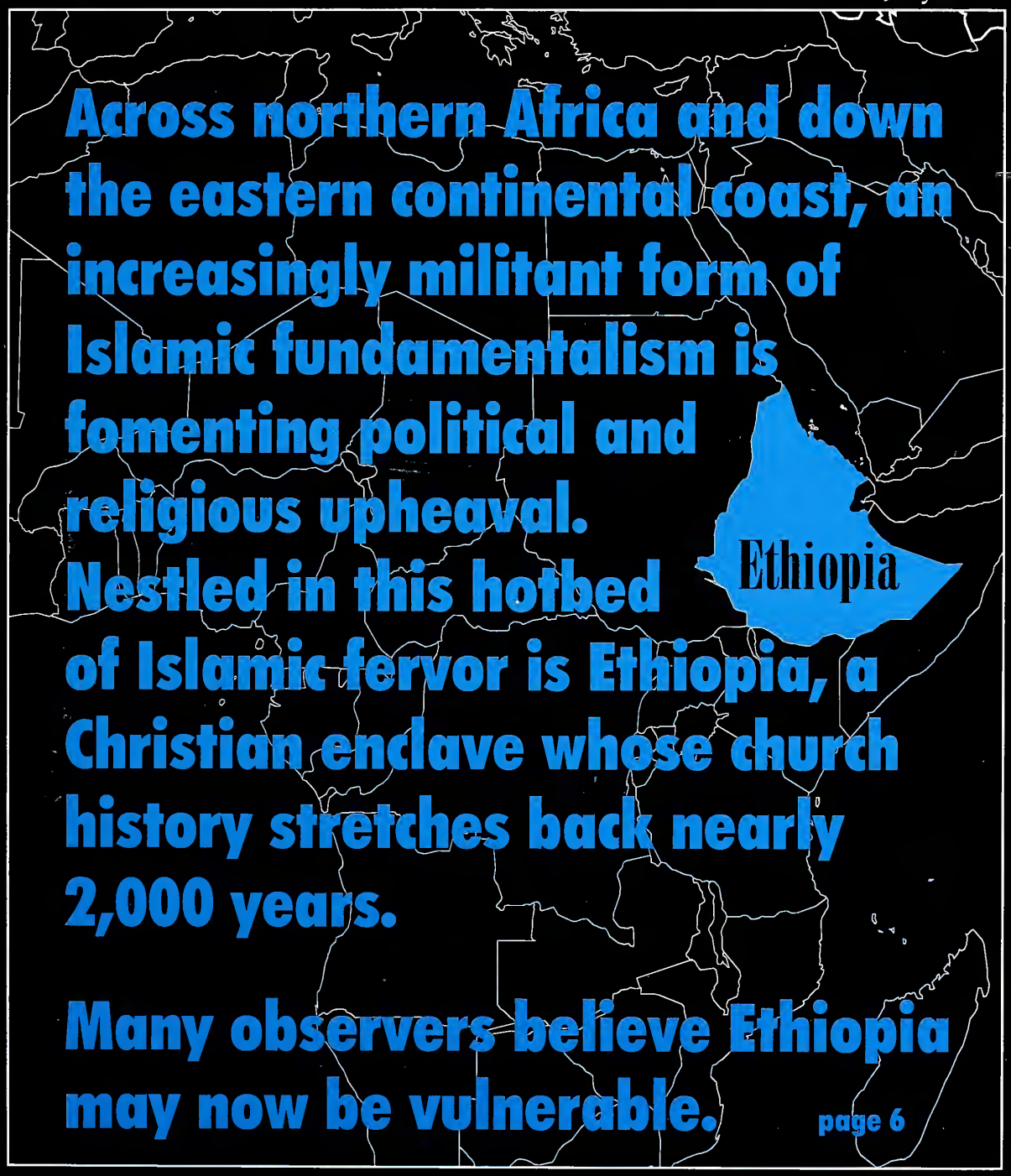
WITNESS

July 1994



Across northern Africa and down the eastern continental coast, an increasingly militant form of Islamic fundamentalism is fomenting political and religious upheaval. Nestled in this hotbed of Islamic fervor is Ethiopia, a Christian enclave whose church history stretches back nearly 2,000 years.

Many observers believe Ethiopia may now be vulnerable.

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Ann Lay describes how the Lord has helped her face the struggle of learning to communicate in a new language.

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On the Cover

Throughout Africa, Christianity and Islam are locked in a spiritual battle for the lives of millions of men and women, boys and girls.

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Evangelicals and Catholics Together?

ROMAN Catholicism. The words evoke a variety of mixed thoughts and emotions for me and I'm sure for you. I grew up in a largely Roman Catholic neighborhood and did my undergraduate work at a Catholic university. While there, two philosophy teachers, both Roman Catholic priests, kindled in me not only a passion for knowledge but for truth. I've always appreciated that. And I've grown to appreciate the theological depth of traditional Roman Catholic teaching on issues relating to medical and moral ethics.

Don't get me wrong. I understand the fundamental theological differences between Roman Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism. As an Evangelical and an Advent Christian, I cannot accept Roman Catholic teaching that gives church tradition equal weight with Scripture, elevates Mary and the saints to worship status, and declares the bishop of Rome supreme over the church because of apostolic succession.

During the last twenty years I've wondered what would happen if some respected Evangelicals and Roman Catholics could meet and honestly discuss where we differ and where we might actually agree. My question was answered earlier this year when several Evangelical and Roman Catholic clergy and laypeople met for a series of consultations sponsored by the Institiute for Religion and Public Life. The eight-page statement issued by the participants is entitled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." It should get plenty of reaction from both camps and may help each to get beyond some ugly caricatures and distortions of each other. Like all statements of this nature, it has its strengths and weaknesses. But it's a statement worth reflecting on.

A model for handling disagreement

One important strength of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" is its recognition both of theological commonalities and differences. Most so-called dialogues pretend that disagreements don't exist or are not important. The ecumenical movement within mainline Protestantism subcumbs to this temptation by suppressing biblical and theological disputes at the altar of political correctness. But true discussion and dialogue only take place when the participants face their differences and understand how those disagreements affect their organizations and work.

The participants affirmed not only the lordship of Christ but "that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ" and "that Christians are to teach and live in obedience to the divinely inspired Scriptures which are the infallible Word of God." But later on, they declare that Evangelicals and Catholics must candidly discuss their theological differences over the nature of the church, the role of the church in the interpretation of Scripture, the issue of Mary and the saints, and the nature of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

And the participants clearly recognize what I think is the key theological difference between Evangelicals and Catholics: their different understandings of the relationship between baptism and the new birth. "For Catholics, all who are validly baptized are born again and are truly, however imperfectly, in communion with Christ. That baptismal grace is to be continuingly reawakened. . . through conversion. For most Evangelicals. . . the experience of conversion is to be followed by baptism as a sign of the new birth." Those conflicting understandings are not merely semantics. They stand at the heart of why Catholics and Protestants have maintained separate identities for the past 500 years.

Common social concerns

The other strength of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" is its well-reasoned response to the secularism that has gripped us during the last

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All That Is Ours in Christ

Bill O'Connor
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THERE'S A sparkling gem of truth in the little book of Philemon that may go overlooked as we study more familiar letters of the New Testament. Paul writes to the slave-owning believer, Philemon, and says, *"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ"* (Philemon 1:6). Gaining a full understanding of all that is ours in Christ requires more than the scope of this article, but a brief examination of that phrase "in Christ" may help us see that we've received far more in Jesus than we might have realized. Let's look at some of the most obvious gifts that are ours because we live in Christ.

First, we possess eternal life because we are in Christ. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). Apart from Jesus, we deserve, and would receive, the wages our sin has earned for us. We would die. But in Christ, because he is the well-spring of life eternal, we have the gift of eternal life. We live because Jesus lives; we will rise to life eternal because he has risen.

Not only do we have eternal life, we are alive to God in Christ right now. We not only look forward to living with the Lord forever, we live with him now. The presence of Jesus in our lives brings us alive to relationship possibilities not conceivable without him. Paul writes, *"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 6:11). We have every right to expect something special, dynamic, and powerful to happen in our lives because we live in Christ. We are alive unto God, and that means being alive to innumerable spiritual possibilities.

Third, our lives are released to achieve their full potential in Christ. Speaking of the deliverance from sin that we've experienced in Jesus, Paul writes, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..."* (Romans 8:1). No condemnation. None. Nothing to hold us back from all that God has planned for us to be. We are released to be all that we can be because we've been set free from condemnation. The only one who will accuse us now is Satan, and Satan is a liar. When we believe what God says about us, we're free to reach as far and as high as we wish. Nothing can hold us back from the highest spiritual attainment except ourselves.

> We have every right to expect something special, dynamic, and powerful to happen in our lives because we live in Christ.

God's love for us in Christ enables us to confidently move forward in the spiritual realm. Paul also tells us that *"neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:39). That ought to be enough incentive for us to reach up, reach out, and do something to the glory of God. You can't truly fail when your life is encompassed by a love like that. You may not always succeed gloriously, but the God who loves you won't give up on you. You may struggle and stumble along the way to your spiritual dreams and goals, but the God who loves you will always be with you and will never let you down. That promise alone—of unfailing love in Christ—should motivate us to "go for it" spiritually.

Fifth, in Christ we are set apart for holiness, thus increasing our spiritual potential even more. The first letter to the Corinthian believers is addressed *"to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy..."* (1 Corinthians 1:2). In Christ we not only have forgiveness of sins, we have release from the power and controlling influence of sin. We are given, by the presence of the Holy Spirit within, the strength to rise above sin's dominating authority so that we control it instead of it controlling us. We can be holy because a life submerged in Christ enables it: We can live up to our calling.

We are also promised God's grace in Christ, a continual bestowal that provides resources beyond our imagination. Paul says to the Corinthians, *"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Corinthians 1:4). God's grace—his unmerited, gracious favor and blessing—is given to us in Christ. When we live our lives in Jesus, we have the assurance that God will be gracious toward us. He will do for us, in us, and through us things that we have not earned and do not deserve. As the song says, "His grace has no measure." Within the confines of his nature, there is nothing that God will not do for a child of his love. God's grace can take us farther than our dreams.

Seventh, God's promises are all available to those who dwell in Christ. The Apostle also writes that *"no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God"* (2 Corinthians 1:20). God delights in saying yes to his people. As we dwell in Christ, our loving heavenly Father takes joy in reaching out to meet our needs. All we need do is find a promise that fits the need and claim it in Christ. The believer can claim, as the chorus says, that "every promise in the book is mine, every chapter, every verse, every line." That's broad enough to cover everything we need for victorious Christian living.

We are promised an abundance of blessing in Christ. With exuberant joy, Paul cries out, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."* Does that leave out anything we need? Of course not. When God says every blessing, he means it. If we're dwelling in Christ and not receiving whatever we need for vital Christian living, it's either because we don't believe God will give it, or because we're not asking. In Christ nothing is left out. It's ours for the asking.

In Christ, there is potential for living above and beyond the world here and now. Paul declares to the Ephesians that *"God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus..."* (Ephesians 2:6). We are alive with Christ now. And He is seated now in the realms of heaven. We can enjoy the blessings of our eternal life, the victory of it, the power of it, here and now because we live in Christ. There's more to be experienced than most of us have yet realized if we will but live immersed in Christ's presence and power.

> **In Christ we not only have forgiveness of sins, we have release from the power and controlling influence of sin.**

Finally, we have the promise that every genuine need will be met by God's riches in Christ. Paul says to the Philippian Christians, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). Not some of your needs some of the time, but all of your needs all of the time, if you will live in him and trust him. God's riches are vast, so vast that no one could begin to count them. And his riches are at our disposal in Christ. He has not committed himself to supplying all our wants, but has promised to supply all our needs. Perhaps, as Jesus once said, we have not because we ask not, or because we do not ask wisely. If we're truly living in Christ we have access to an abundant supply.

We haven't begun to scratch the surface of *all* that is ours in Christ, but we've managed to cast our gaze across the spectrum of possibilities that emanate from our relationship with the Lord. What Paul writes to the Colossian Christians sums it up. *"You have been given fullness in Christ..."* (Colossians 2:10). Fullness means an overflowing of every good thing so that nothing remains empty, so that nothing is lacking in our lives, so that we have all that God intends for us. Fullness implies that every corner of life has been permeated and saturated with Jesus, that our lives are charged by his presence and fueled by his power. Most of us have a long way to go before we will realize *all* that is ours in Christ. But it's there waiting for us. And it's worth reaching for. The Christian life holds possibilities for every believer that are just waiting to be grasped. It's all ours in Christ. ❑

Bill O'Connor, an ordained elder and registered evangelist in the Church of the Nazarene, is a freelance writer, a conference speaker and seminar leader, and the founder of Northwest Christian Resource Service of Newberg, Oregon. He has twenty-eight years of ministry experience, having served in six churches. He recently completed a fifteen-year pastorate in Newberg, Oregon. He now specializes in the presentation of seminars for schools, providing resource materials for pastors, and teaching congregational seminars on a variety of topics. He has sold more than fifty articles to some twenty-three different Christian publications in the past year. He works out of his own home where he lives with his wife and daughter.

Church in the Hotbed

Ethiopia's Ancient Christian Community Faces the Challenges of Islamic Expansion

Kim A. Lawton
News Network International

ACROSS NORTHERN Africa and down the eastern continental coast, an increasingly militant form of Islamic fundamentalism is fomenting political and religious upheaval. In Algeria and Egypt, fundamentalist efforts to overthrow moderate Muslim governments have led to repression, violence, and terrorism. In Sudan, the fundamentalist Islamic regime in Khartoum has been locked in a brutal civil war with mostly Christian and animist forces from the South.

Nestled in this hotbed of Islamic fervor is Ethiopia, a Christian enclave whose church history stretches back nearly 2,000 years. Local legend holds that the roots of the Ethiopian church can be traced to the Apostle Thomas, who Ethiopians say visited their nation on a missionary trip not long after the death of Christ. The New Testament book of Acts recounts how the disciple Philip evangelized an Ethiopian eunuch from the court of Queen Candace.

Historical records document that Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the ancient Ethiopian Axumite kingdom in the 4th century. And Orthodox Christianity remained the official state religion until the Marxist revolution in 1974.

But after nearly twenty years of communism, followed by a rocky transition to democracy, persistent pov-

erty, and weakened social status for Christianity, many observers believe Ethiopia may now be vulnerable to the radical Islam that is sweeping across much of the Horn of Africa.

Estimates of the current religious breakdown vary. Orthodox and Protestants claim that about sixty percent of Ethiopia's fifty million people are Christians, while Muslims lay claim to between forty and fifty percent of this once predominantly Christian nation.

"Islam is growing very rapidly here," admitted one Ethiopian evangelical denominational leader, who asked not to be identified. "At this rate, the Islamization of the country won't be very long because the rate they are going at is very speedy. This is really influencing the communities and society at large."

Political instability

Analysts say Ethiopia's uncertain political standing has left a vacuum for the growth of radical Islam. Religion, severely repressed during the communist "Derg" regime, was granted full freedom after the ouster of Marxist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam in May 1991. However, the nearly three-year-old provisional government has yet to adopt a constitution to enshrine these freedoms.

Yet, for the first time in Ethiopian history, Muslims have ostensibly been granted equal footing with Christianity. And they are taking swift advantage of their new freedom.

According to the Ethiopian Supreme Islamic Council, more than 500 mosques have been built since 1991. The council claims there are some 5,000 mosques throughout Ethiopia today. And according to one Orthodox source, in the capital city of Addis Ababa alone, before 1974 there were 5 mosques; today there are more than 65.

"They are sending in new sheikhs, setting up new operations in new areas, building new mosques, and becoming involved in multi-million-dollar enterprises," the denominational leader said. "And comparatively speaking, the church is not doing a similar move."

The leader alleged that these new Muslim projects are being funded with money from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Yemen, all countries with strong fundamentalist movements. The allegation could not be documented, but it is commonly held throughout the country.

Indeed, the foreign Islamic influence troubles many Ethiopian Christians, who claim the provisional government is in the debt of countries such as Sudan and Saudi Arabia, which supported the revolution to topple the communists.

Many Christians say radical Muslims are also taking advantage of Ethiopia's chronic economic devastation to recruit new members. Still one of the poorest nations in Africa, Ethiopia is only slowly recovering from the tragic famine which claimed the lives of tens of thousands between 1984 and 1985.

According to Dr. Benjamin Yesuf, professor at the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa, many Muslims are using large relief and development efforts to attract new converts—a charge Muslims level against evangelical Christians as well. But, said Yesuf, who has a Muslim background, "A lot of Christians are becoming Muslims because (the Muslims) are delivering on their promises."

Hussein Yosef, a Muslim convert who now works with the Kale Heywet (Word of Life) church, charged that Muslim leaders are "paid by the Arabian leaders if they bring many people to the Muslim religion."

Weakened Orthodox social position

Muslim expansion is coming at a time when the Ethiopian Orthodox church finds itself amid deep social transition. No longer the state church of Ethiopia, the Orthodox church has lost considerable political and economic clout, although it has gained new self-autonomy.

According to Addis Ababa University Professor Tadesse Tamrat, the Orthodox monastic institutions "still shape, to a very large extent, the identity of Ethiopia, at least Christian Ethiopia." But he acknowledged that decades of isolation and repression have created within the Orthodox church "the need of internal development, the need for greater enlightenment, (and) the need to provide more enlightened ministry in the church."

Complicating the religious situation in Ethiopia even further are deep tensions within the Christian community between Protestants and Orthodox. Evangelicals allege a pattern of discrimination and attacks at the hands of Orthodox, while the Orthodox accuse the evangelicals of unfair "sheep stealing" by targeting their members for evangelism efforts.

Patriarch Abuna Paulos maintains that Muslims and Orthodox Christians have lived together for "centuries in a peaceful manner with a respect for each other." Likewise, Muslim leaders emphasize a long history of peaceful coexistence in the region and deny any orchestrated effort to take over the nation for Islam.

Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Addis Ababa, 1993.

But, say Christian leaders, Islamic fundamentalism is gaining ground

rapidly, especially in the southern regions. And increasing numbers of violent incidents are being reported. According to the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, "Tensions mounted in 1993 between Muslims and Protestants on the one hand, and the Orthodox community on the other."

The most serious incident occurred in September, when an Orthodox prophet (unsanctioned by the official Orthodox church) organized followers in the historic Gondar region to protest the growing influence of both Protestants and Muslims. At least 13 people were killed in the ensuing clashes between members of the various religious groups and the security forces.

In February, officials of the Meserete Kristos (Mennonite) church in Addis Ababa received a report that in Jimma, Muslims invaded a church hall, killed sheep in the facility and then occupied the premises while chewing "choat," an intoxicating drug from the region. "This is like an indication of desecrating a Christian holy ground," one church official told NNI. "That shows some kind of aggression."

The Meserete Kristos spokesperson said two Jimma Christians had fled the area because the Muslims had threatened to kill them. Still, Gabriel Galatis, spokesman for Food for the Hungry and a Meserete Kristos church elder, is optimistic that even with the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism, Ethiopia will not turn into another Sudan where Muslims are imposing a severe Islamization campaign. Galatis believes the majority of Ethiopian Muslims do not support the militant fundamentalists.

"Of course they would like to see their faith being expanded and their rights respected. I understand that because it is also the feeling of Christians," he said.

Galatis asserted that Ethiopian Christians and Muslims have "a very deep sympathy" because of their shared hardships during the communist "Red Terror" era, the devastating

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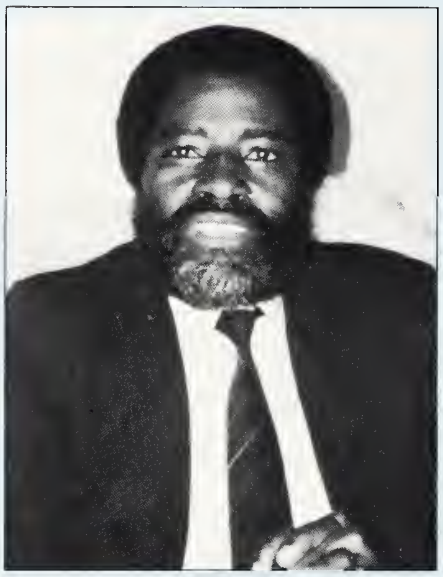
Islam in



A Conversation with Tokunboh Adeyemo

A NEW BRAND of radical Islamic fundamentalism is gaining clout in many regions of the African continent—including historically Christian communities. In places such as Sudan, Egypt, and Algeria, clashes between Muslim fundamentalists and their opposition have prompted spiraling violence, terrorist attacks, and human rights abuses.

For Africa's Christian church, this movement has posed particularly difficult challenges, according to Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA).

Adeyemo himself was born and raised a Muslim, and he says while the church "has been asleep," the Islamic faith has been hard at work building support and recruiting converts in the 56 African nations. News Network International staff correspondent Kim A. Lawton spoke with Adeyemo about the situation during a recent interview at the AEA headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Taking a general view, how is the spread of Islam in Africa affecting the religious liberty of Christians?

The scenario that I see would indicate three particular formats. The first is where the church is obviously and clearly in the majority. There may be the voice of dissent from the minorities—especially Muslims—but they are likely to bark rather than to bite. For example in Zambia, it is fairly conspicuous that Christians, nominal and what have you, are in the majority. When the present leader came into power, he even made a statement that this is a Christian nation. The Muslims reacted angrily, but did nothing beyond that because they are decisively in the minority.

The second scenario is where the Muslims can claim to be at par with Christians, and they have just a little palm on the handle of the political setup of the day. Then, they want to assert certain rights and make things difficult for the Christian. An example of this would be the northern part of Nigeria, where the Muslims have political clout. The same thing applies to the Sudan, where they are claiming to be in the majority. They want to introduce the Sharia (Islamic law), and political persecution is there.

In Ethiopia this is also the case. Some Muslims are agitating to have Islamic law in the community, although the case there is complicated by a divided (Orthodox and Protestant) Christian church.

The third scenario is where the Muslims may be in the minority, but the head of state happens to be a

Africa

Muslim. You find the persecution there is not obvious, but still a different form of persecution. What I see in that type of scenario is deprivation, using the government instrument to deprive the Christians. Examples of this would include Gabon, which just completed an election, and Gambia. The tendency there is to use the government structure to favor the Muslims and deprive the Christians.

Are there some places where religious persecution is particularly bad?

I would say that in the Africa south of the Sahara—black Africa—religious persecution is not as severe and intense as you find in places to the north of the Sahara or in the Middle East. The reason is that in Africa south of the Sahara, the people are first and foremost part of a tribe before they are part of a religious group. The serious issue that we find there is more of the inter-tribalism. Take for example Burundi or Rwanda.

If you look to Nigeria, even, you will notice that the religious persecution is mainly limited to the northern part of Nigeria. Why? Because in the southern part of Nigeria, the people are strongly tribal. So within the same family, you will find some members who are Muslims, some members who are Christians, some members who are traditionalist. And they are living peacefully together. It is the tribal, rather than the religious affiliation that takes precedence.

In black Africa, where you have had religious persecution, I always say look for a third force, either outside money, outside literature, or outside media. For example, in South Africa, there is a man, Ahmad Dedat, who is constantly disturbing the Christian community. He is a Muslim apologist, author of (the booklet) *Islamic Selections*, and he is making disciples all over the place. He is not a black African, but is originally from Pakistan. So he is a third force.

When you look at the north of Nigeria, you see the influence of the Arabs. It is the influence of outsiders either by their writings or their tapes or their religious teachers imported into a particular area.

How concerned are African Christians about the influence of Arab Muslims on the continent?

It is a concern. To what extent can Islam really survive in the African context without outside influence? This is a question that I have studied, and the answer I have come up with is not much.

The Islam that I see growing in Africa has to be propped up by money coming from Saudi or other oil-rich Islamic nations of the east. It is kept alive by the annual pilgrimage, the festival type of thing, or it is constantly sustained by Islamic theologians and teachers who come into our situation.

Muslims have been very, very reluctant to translate the Koran into local vernaculars. Up to now, any translation of the Koran is not accepted as the Koran. It's not like the Bible that we want to put into any language. But if it is left up to the people to contextualize it, what you will find will not be acceptable to Islam.

The Islamic scholars from the Arab nations still look down on Islam outside of the Arab world. They call it "folk Islam." And there is a demand that this folk Islam should be purified, should go through a cycle of reformation.

How does the Christian church in Africa confront the Islamic challenge?

For a long time, the African church did not realize the seriousness of the challenge. As a result, it was more or less like we were sleeping. And in the meantime, (Muslims) are making great inroads.

Finally, the Christian people have begun to see that the Muslims are really out for business. Once Muslims are able to get political power, they will be in the key place where decisions are made.

The Association of Evangelicals in Africa Evangelism and Missions Commission is sponsoring seminars on Muslim awareness all over the continent. We describe what their game plans are, what the true figures are, and what their agenda is. A number of other parachurch organizations are also conducting them.

The group, Life Challenge, of South Africa is launching a new magazine about this to inform the society about what is going on so that the church is prepared to respond.

What kind of response would you like to see from the churches?

Beyond just informing the people, we have discovered that the only way to respond meaningfully is to go out and share the gospel. I use the word aggressive, not in the sense of combative, but as in an aggressive training and sending out of African missionaries to Islamic situations. We run a number of schools to train young people in hands-on preparation to be sent out to the field. We have young men and women going to live among the Muslims, sharing with them.

We are constructively engaging in cross-cultural evangelism in the

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Women's Ministries

Jesus' Sustaining POWER

Ann Lay
West Kobe, Japan

IN 1990, our family moved to Japan and my husband Steve and I began serving as Advent Christian missionaries. Adjusting to our new life in Japan has not always been easy. Living so far away from family is something that will always be hard for me. But as painful as that adjustment continues to be, it has not been as difficult as learning to accept my limitations in communicating in Japanese.

Barriers to communicating

To some, the term "language barrier" simply means one person cannot speak another person's language. Anyone who has traveled to a non-English speaking nation for a vacation has undoubtedly experienced some of the frustration associated with a language barrier. But when a person lives in a foreign country for an extended time, "language barrier" can become synonymous with "illiterate."

This is especially in a nation like Japan where its written language is essentially a picture language. The Japanese call those pictures "kanji." Did you know that to be able to read the daily newspaper in Japanese, a person must know at least 1,800 different kanji. And most kanji have more than one pronunciation. There's no way to sound out a word like you can in English. For example, this simple kanji 日 can be pronounced in several different ways: ni, nichi, jitsu, ka, bi, or hi. The correct pronunciation is determined by the context.

Can you see some of the difficulties in learning to communicate in Japanese? If so, perhaps you can sense the frustration that results when a person pours hours of time and energy into studying a language like Japanese, and still progresses at what seems to be a snail's pace.

Since language learning has never been easy for me, I knew I was facing quite a challenge when I started formal Japanese language studies. I expected to have problems. But I never expected that one of my biggest problems would be battling discouragement. Often I find myself concentrating on all the words and sentence patterns that I don't know, instead of rejoicing over the words and phrases I do know.

> Adjusting to our new life in Japan has not always been easy.

Jesus understands

That kind of thinking brings me face-to-face with discouragement. There are times when trying to communicate with store clerks, neighbors, and friends in Japanese seems too overwhelming, mentally exhausting, and emotionally draining. During those times, I find my own resources inadequate in so many ways. That's when the temptation to become discouraged is the strongest. Frequently, those are the times when my prayers are offered more through tears than through words as I seek the Lord's strength and encouragement.

A Scripture passage that has been especially helpful to me when I face frustration and discouragement is Hebrews 4:15-16. These two verses talk about the help that Jesus is so willing and ready to give us when we freely share our fears and frustrations with him. This passage reminds me that Jesus is able to understand our struggles better than anyone else. When we choose to focus on Jesus and his resources instead of our own weaknesses and inadequacies, we will indeed receive the help we need so we can be obedient to him.

Everyday we have opportunities to trust Jesus and receive his help. Since Jesus is indeed trustworthy, let's trust him in all circumstances. When we do, our faith will grow and our joy will increase. ❑

Ann Lay is an Advent Christian career missionary in Japan. She and her husband Steve are planting a church in West Kobe.

Missions Watch

Serving for God's Glory

David S. McCarthy

RUTH SOUCIER (Japan): Ruth has completed a three-year short-term commitment and returned home. She gives thanks for seeds that have been planted in the lives of her students and writes, "I did my best and trust God to work it out for his glory."

Prayer Pointers: That her students will continue to read the Bibles they received in her classes, and that they will visit the church although the language classes have ended.

BERYL JOY HOLLIS (India): During travels to local churches and conferences, she met Pastor Ken Lawrence, from the Bristol, Connecticut Advent Christian Church, his son, Tim, and an elder from the church. Ken spoke at a baptismal service, and conducted special meetings in several churches.

Prayer Pointers: The India churches have many physical property needs: more land to erect buildings and repairs to existing structures. Pray also for the extensive teaching ministry Beryl Joy conducts in Advent Christian congregations throughout southern India.

DAVID VIGNALI (Philippines): Oro Bible College held its commencement in the spring. Soon afterwards, Teen Missions began their Philippines program for the summer, with several teams visiting from Advent Christian congregations. This was a busy season for our people in the Philippines as they celebrated the fortieth anniversary of Advent Christian missions in the Islands. The Asian Strategy Conference also met in April.

Prayer Pointers: Pray for leaders who carry out decisions and new directions from the strategy conference. Also pray for a successful beginning of the school year at Oro Bible College.

STEVEN AND ANN LAY (Japan): Margaret Helms and Karen Rigney will be working with a Japanese national, Misao Kawaguchi, to continue programs at New Life Chapel while the Lay family is home on furlough. Recently, Misao's 21-year-old cousin began coming to English language classes, expressed an interest in knowing more about Christianity, and then received Christ as her Savior and Lord. A large number of Japanese visitors and inquirers about the classes have encouraged the Lays this spring.

Prayer Pointers: Pray for Margaret, Karen, and Misao as they assume leadership at the Chapel during the Lays' absence. ❑

Church in the Hotbed

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famine of 1984 and 1985, the 30-year war with now-independent Eritrea and the revolution that toppled the communists. "With all this deprivation and war and famine and exploitation, one would think that people would have already gone wild and started slaughtering one another," he said, adding, "but it hasn't happened."

"Ethiopians are very tolerant, even of the Muslims," agreed an Orthodox laywoman. "It's different here than in the rest of Africa. The historic Christian influence will prevent that kind of thing."

But other Christians fear the time for change may have finally come to Ethiopia. "The Ethiopian situation is in a deep crisis. As Christians, we are very concerned about the future," said one evangelical leader who is trying to organize reconciliation efforts between the Orthodox and the Protestants.

For their part, evangelical churches are responding to Muslim expansion with expansion methods of their own. "We have to preach the gospel," said Berhanu Adenew, director of development projects for the Mulu Wongel (Full Gospel Believers') Church. "We have to love these people and bring the gospel to them."

According to Hussein Yosef, the Kale Heywet church has also launched an aggressive Bible training program for its own people. "We are training them about what the Muslim looks like. . . then they cannot be converted easily," he asserted.

Yosef shares concerns about Ethiopia's future, but he also retains hope: "We have faith that God can do many miraculous things. He kept us during the time of the communists, and he will keep us even in the years ahead." ❑

Why Did You HURT Me?

Katie Gregory
Clifton Park, N.Y.

THE CAMP season was in full swing, and I, as the camp nurse, was busy treating a large number of campers with the usual ailments: poison ivy, stomach aches, and colds. I barely noticed the boy who came in and took a seat in the corner of the infirmary. As the room gradually cleared, I saw him. He sat with his head propped up in his hands. He was coughing and sneezing. His eyes were red and watery. His face was covered with a red rash. I checked his temperature: 102 degrees. These weren't the usual camper complaints.

"Could it be...?" I began to think.

"No, it couldn't be the measles. All our campers are immunized." I had personally checked each medical form.

I looked in his mouth. There they were, the telltale sign: koplik's spots, little pinpoint bluish-white dots. No doubt about it, he had the measles.

I called his mother. "You'd better come take him home," I said. "By the way, didn't he have a measles immunization? You marked on his medical form that he did."

"He's the youngest of seven," she replied. "I just figured he must have. With seven kids, it's hard to keep track."

"Great, just great," I thought, as I hung up the phone.

I turned around and saw my 9-month-old quietly playing in the corner of the room. Measles immunization isn't given until after the child's first birthday. He hadn't been immunized, but he had been exposed. I wondered what his risks were. Measles can be a very serious, even deadly disease, a disease which can leave the child deaf, blind, or even mentally retarded. I called my pediatrician.

> *I felt* **awful,** *but I knew what I had to do.*

"He may have some immunity, since you breast fed him for five months, but you can't be certain," responded the pediatrician. "If I were you, I wouldn't take a chance. You know the possible complications of measles. I don't think it's worth the risk. I think he should have gamma globulin."

I had to agree. There was no choice. The risks were too great. He needed the gamma globulin, but who would give it? We were in the middle of the woods, many miles from the nearest doctor or another nurse. The only solution: I would have to give the injection.

Carefully, I drew up the gamma globulin into the syringe. I looked over at my son. He was playing by his toy box. He reached over, grabbed the side of his toy box and pulled himself up. He looked at me and grinned. He was being good, and he knew it. I smiled back. I did not want to hurt him, but what else could I do?

I walked over and picked him up. He liked being held. He was smiling as he put his arms around my neck. I felt awful, but I knew what I had to do. I laid him down on the examining table and began swabbing his thigh with alcohol.

He looked puzzled.

I picked up the syringe and quickly jabbed him with the needle.

He screamed as he felt the medicine enter his leg, and then he looked

up at me.

"Why are you hurting me?" his eyes seemed to say. "Don't you love me? What did I do wrong? I was playing with my toys. I pulled myself up. I was being good. Why did you hurt me?"

What could I say? How could I explain to a nine-month-old child that he had been exposed to the measles. How could I explain that the pain was necessary, that without it he might become retarded, deaf, blind, or even die. Yes, I loved him. I loved him so much that I had to hurt him. Some day he might be able to understand why I had done it, but at his age, he was too young. He would just have to trust me.

I did the only thing I could. I picked him up, held him in my arms and told him over and over and over that I loved him.

Many years later, pain entered my life. I looked to God in prayer and asked, "Why? Why are you letting me hurt? Don't you love me? I try to be good."

Then I remembered the time when I had had to hurt my son. I remembered his eyes looking at me and his not being able to understand. I felt the warm presence of God. I thought about God and the universe he had created and realized that there are some things beyond my ability to comprehend.

God cannot always explain to me why bad things happen. I must learn to trust him. And while pain engulfs me, God will come and lift me up. As he holds me in his arms, I'll know he cares. ❑

Islam in Africa continued from page 9

Islamic context. We have not done anything like this before. But instead of waiting to be invaded by the North, we are now challenging the church to look North, take the Bible to the Muslim territory. We are calling it "Africa for Jesus." It's a strategic plan to take the gospel to every part of the continent.

We are also urging our people to become constructively engaged in the political processes in their various nations. We challenge them not to abandon it to the Muslims. As a church congregation, we cannot do that. But as individual Christians, we can do it. People are beginning to take that challenge seriously. We believe that if we are the salt and light of the earth, we must get involved. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A	B	I	D	E
S	E	E	K	
K	N	O	W	

August

1 Praise God that several Advent Christian congregations are actively involved in sending **short-term mission teams** to Mexico and Honduras.

2 Pray that God will not only call **new missionaries** to serve with Advent Christian missions in the years to come, but that he will supply the **financial resources** necessary to send them.

3 Praise God for the many Advent Christian congregations who participated in **Penny Crusade**.

4 As the **United States** celebrates its 218th anniversary, pray that God touch those caught in the grips of secularism and materialism that has grown in our society.

5 Pray that God will use the upcoming **Day of Labor for the Lord** campaign not only to build strong financial support for Advent Christian ministries but to give us a better understanding of Christian stewardship of our time and resources.

6 Pray for **Pastor Melchor and Jane Jandayan** as they provide leadership for the Advent Christian Church in San Francisco.

7 Praise God for the many years of service that **Marion Damon**, **Barbara White**, and **Beryl Joy Hollis** have given with Advent Christian missions in India and pray that as they begin their last year in India, God will richly bless their ministries.

8 Pray that God will raise up a couple to serve with Advent Christian missions in **India** beginning next year.

9 Praise God for the lives touched by Jesus Christ through the ministry of Advent Christian pastors and congregations in **India**.

10 Pray that students in the India **School of Evangelism** will sense God's direction and leading as they prepare to establish and lead congregations.

11 Praise God for **Karen Rigney's** commitment to serve with Advent Christian missions in Japan.

12 Pray that God will give **Karen** strength as she begins language school and teaches English to her Japanese students.

13 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they communi-

cate the work of missions while on furlough.

14 Praise God for the many opportunities that **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** have had to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions while on deputation.

15 Pray that Christians throughout **Malaysia** will experience God's protection from persecution in a nation where it is "illegal" to speak to a Muslim about Christ.

16 Pray that God will guide Advent Christian national missionaries in Malaysia—**Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam**, **James and Mercy Devadasson**, and **Ruth Devairakkam**—as they proclaim the gospel in this officially Islamic nation.

17 Praise God for a number of **short-term mission teams** sent out by Advent Christian congregations. Pray that God will give them strength as they provide support and evangelistic outreach.

18 Pray for Advent Christian young people serving on summer assignments with **Teen Missions** and **Project Timothy**, a ministry sponsored by the South Georgia/Florida Conference.

19 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Harry and Etta Soucy** had during their six months of ministry at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

20 Pray that God will provide for the needs of both faculty and students at **Oro Bible College**.

21 Pray for Philippine missionaries **Margaret Helms** and **David Vignali** as they work to share the gospel.

22 Pray that God will continue to lead and guide the Advent Christian General Conference and national leaders who met last April for the **Asian Strategy Conference**.

23 Praise God for the ministry that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** continue to have as they provide leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in the El Florido community east of Tijuana, Mexico.

24 Pray that God will guide Mexico field superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he interviews potential church planters for Advent Christian mission work in Mexico.

25 Pray for students at **Tecate Bible Institute** as they continue to prepare for service in Mexico.

26 Praise God for the work of **Mexican Medical Mission** as they meet the physical and spiritual needs of people in many small Mexican villages.

27 Pray that God will use **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** to touch young lives for Jesus Christ in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

28 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Nigeria** will be effective in reaching people with the good news of Christ's love.

29 Pray for **Pastor Ben Cleon** as he provides leadership for Advent Christian churches and leaders in Liberia.

30 Pray that God will bring peace and healing in **Somalia**, **Bosnia**, the **Sudan**, and **Liberia**.

31 Praise God that our salvation is based not on anything we do to try to please him but totally on **God's grace** expressed through Jesus Christ.

Together? continued from page 3

thirty years. The participants recognize "a growing convergence between Evangelicals and Catholics" that focuses on a "common effort to protect human life" and the need to "contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth." Evangelical-Catholic cooperation can "help secure due process of law for the unborn" and resist "an encroaching culture of death." In the participants' words, "We will do all in our power to resist proposals for euthanasia, eugenics, and population control that exploit the vulnerable, corrupt the integrity of medicine, deprave our culture, and betray the moral truths of our constitutional order."

Especially good is the statement's understanding of religious freedom. The declaration strongly protests the notion that the separation of church and state means the separation of religion from public life. "The argument increasingly voiced in sectors of our political culture, that religion should be excluded from the public square must be recognized as an assault upon the most elementary principles of democratic governance." Simply stated, remove religious freedom and authentic democracy ceases to exist.

Common witness?

For all the strengths of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," there's one crucial weakness. In their discussion of the nature of Christian missions, the participants don't take seriously enough the significant theological divergence between Catholics and Evangelicals on the very issues they so clearly stated—baptism and the new birth. What a Roman Catholic might view as proselytizing, an Evangelical will see as evangelism. For us, as Evangelicals, the issue is never what church a person belongs to, it's his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Having your name on a church or parish roll, be it Catholic, Baptist, Advent Christian, or any other, does not guarantee salvation. What we do with Jesus Christ is the issue.

So my feelings about "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" mirror my mixed feelings about Roman Catholicism. It's a provocative document that deserves wide discussion among both parties. It clarifies our differences and our common concerns and I appreciate the participants' willingness to grapple with tough theological and moral issues. I appreciate their concern that Evangelicals and Catholics get beyond caricatures of each other and attempt some honest dialogue. We can work together on moral and political concerns. But serious talk about a common world mission is premature as long as our theological differences regarding the nature of Christian conversion remain so wide. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Time and time again on the university campus, you are told that freedom of ideas is the most important idea . . . .Freedom is the great illusion. . . .Everyone is enslaved to something. The goal of faith is to make you enslaved to the right stuff . . . . Christians exist to demonstrate to our culture that true freedom is being yoked to what is true—Jesus.

—*Stanley Hauerwas in* The Door

The problem is not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter but that all subject matter is presented as entertaining. . . To say it another way: Entertainment is the supra-ideology of all discourse on television. No matter what is depicted or from what point of view, the overarching presumption is that it is there for our amusement and pleasure.

—*Neil Postman in* Amusing Ourselves to Death

The great fallacy of our time, Malcolm Muggeridge has written, is the one that says that we may pursue collective virtue apart from personal behavior.

—*Herbert Schlossberg*

The way of the Christian leader is not the way of upward mobility in which our world has invested so much, but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross. . . .Here we touch the most important quality of Christian leadership in the future. It is not a leadership of power and control, but a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ, is made manifest.

—*Henri Nouwen*

Religion always teaches that you can get to God by doing something. Your good standing with God depends on what you do. Do the law, perform religion, do it right, look good, try hard. Is that the gate through which we are called to find life? No. Those leading people to it are ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing. They look like sheep, and they appear to be the safest, most righteous, but they lead people down the wrong path. Jesus *plus anything* is not Jesus!

—*David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen*

Here then is the paradox of our humanness: our dignity and our depravity. We are capable of both the loftiest nobility and of the basest cruelty.

—*John R.W. Stott in* The Contemporary Christian

The powerful illusion that has cast its spell over the entire secular culture today is that sex is a magical experience which will bring our lives into the true intimacy we desire. It is a lie. Sex which ignores God will only increase our loneliness. But there is a seductive power in the illusion.

—*Tom Eisenman*

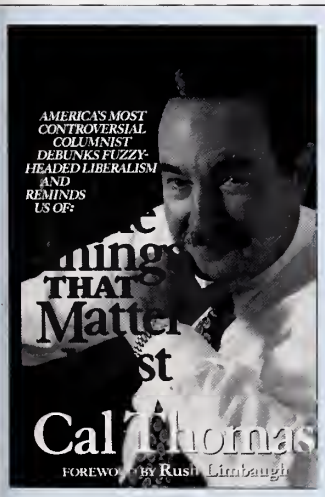
We need to understand that God's will is *always the best there is for us* — and that includes good things! Most human tragedy is the consequence of human actions or poor decisions, not God's punishment or divine purposes. We all suffer from the evil loose in the world. Let us not blame God for it!

—*Archibald Hart*

We, the church, have been entrusted with proclaiming the message that we have received from him [Jesus]. When we do, we risk being called rigid and narrow-minded.

We must face the reality that Christianity "discriminates." It says one path is the right way. Christianity makes a ridiculous set of claims: that an omnipotent God bothered to create and love us; that he let us and our forebears spit in his face in rebellion; that he chose a particular and unsavory primitive tribe to be his conduit for blessing; that he actually revealed what he wanted these people to believe and how they were to live; and that this God actually became a person and died for us to conquer sin and death on our behalf. That is a most unlikely story. But Christians are supposed to spread the news that this is *the* story, the only true story.

—*Stanton Jones quoted from* Christianity Today



To suggest that a person's strongly held religious view is less tolerant than a strongly held antireligious view is morally, intellectually, and politically inconsistent and incorrect.

—*Cal Thomas in* The Things that Matter Most

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Advent Christian

WITNESS

August 1994

In the spring of this year, this Advent Christian ran for governor of Maine. His story, his ideas, and his reflections on the place of Christianity in public life begin on page 4.

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Jack Wyman looks at the Judeo/Christian roots of America and offers a balanced approach to the relationship between church and state.

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Jack Wyman greets his supporters and campaign workers on primary election day in Maine.
—photo courtesy of Portland, Me. Press Herald

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Advent Christian WITNESS

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Working Nine to Five

AFTER READING that title, I'm sure some of you are already humming that little ditty made popular by Dolly Parton. Work. We sing about it, joke about it, and moan about it. Our jobs sometimes bring joy and satisfaction. But they also can be the source of stress, despair, and broken relationships.

Even though we spend at least a third of our lives at work, how our jobs relate to our Christian faith is something I have not heard Evangelicals talk much about in the last twenty years. That should concern us not only because we're ignoring something that people devote a significant amount of time to, but because a Christian understanding of work and vocation stood at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. Much of our preaching, teaching, and writing seem to focus on what we do at church. We have a tough time communicating how the Christian faith relates to what most of us do at least five days each week.

> Secularism will continue to reign supreme in our culture until Christians grasp that God's calling impacts our jobs and how we do them.

God's calling in daily activity

How does our faith in Jesus Christ impact how we think about our jobs? To answer that, we start by seeing that our Christian calling includes all aspects of our lives—family, community, recreation, citizenship, education, as well as the paid and unpaid work we do. God does not divide our lives into religious and non-religious categories. The apostle Paul makes clear in Ephesians 4:11-13 that Christian maturity is God's goal for each of us. That involves learning to practice our Lord's two great Commandments—loving God and loving our neighbors—at home, at church, at work, in the neighborhood, wherever we are.

God created us to be co-workers with him. He's given us much of the responsibility for managing his creation. And early in Genesis, we see the first partnership between God and humanity in action. After God planted the garden in Eden, he "took the man and put him into the garden. . . to cultivate it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). William Hendricks puts it well, "All legitimate work is an extension of God's work." Even though sin has tainted our world and some occupations are illegal and corrupt God's purposes, work as a human activity is a good thing given to us by God. And through our jobs, we fulfill God's will as we "rule over the works of thy hands" (Psalm 8:6).

Martin Luther, the great sixteenth-century Christian who sparked the Protestant Reformation, believed that God's calling applied to the daily activity of all Christians. For Luther, Christ came not to make people more religious but more faithful. And we practice being faithful as we carry out the duties and responsibilities of our work. Our jobs provide us with a concrete way to love our neighbors and focus on a particular aspect of our calling as co-workers with God. How we do our work is just as important in God's eyes as our church attendance.

Christian vocation

Luther's understanding of Christian calling also challenged the idea that "religious" vocations (priests, ministers, nuns, monks) were somehow superior to other callings.

That's a trap I think many American Christians have fallen into especially since the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s and 1930s. Evangelicals began to see work—especially work in areas like law, politics, journalism, higher education, and the arts—as somehow less than Christian. The result of our withdrawal from those spheres of influence has been a secularism that is now the dominant moral and intellectual force in our society.

Every week, I get mail from some well-meaning organization with the latest strategy for overcoming this secular influence. (Naturally, my check

continued on page 11

A Conversation

GOD'S CALL TO PUBLIC SERVICE

with

Jack Wyman

JACK WYMAN is a member of Blessed Hope Advent Christian Church in Waterville, Maine. In June, he placed third out of eight candidates in the Maine Republican gubernatorial primary.

Born in Hartford, Conn., he graduated from the University of Maine at Farmington in 1975, where he majored in history. He earned a master's degree in political science from the University of Maine five years later.

He launched his formal political career in 1976, winning a seat in the Maine House of Representatives where he served until 1980. He lost a bid for the state Senate in 1980. He became associate director of the Christian Civic League in 1983 and its executive director of 1984. He resigned last year to run for governor.

Jack is married to the former Elisabeth Kelly. They have three daughters, Suzanne, Olivia, and Vanessa.

Ed Peratta, a news reporter for the Portland, Maine Press Herald and a member of the Kennebunk Advent Christian Church, interviewed Jack Wyman last April as the primary campaign was getting underway. He asked not only about issues relating to the campaign but about the importance of Christian involvement in civic life.

photo by Portland, Me. Press Herald

When did you first come to know Christ?

I gave my life to Christ when I was nine-years-old. I was at a summer camp in the Berkshires which, I understand, has an Advent Christian connection. Steve Brown, a dear friend of mine, former pastor at our church, was associated with the camp for a number of years. When I spent a week at the camp an evangelist preached salvation. His name was Bill. Pastor Bill we called him. He gave the invitation and I raised my hand and I accepted Christ in my heart. Then I was baptized in the Rockville, Conn., Baptist Church.

How did you become involved in politics?

I first took an interest in history when I was 10. I wasn't interested in politics. I didn't know much about politics. But I was interested in the presidents, in history, and I read a lot. The 1969 election was the beginning of my political awareness. I was 15 and I followed the election very closely. Later—I was still 15—I wrote a 250-page analysis of the election. I went from supporting Richard Nixon to supporting George Wallace and ended up rooting for Hubert Humphrey. I was a very eclectic child. All over the place. I suppose a 15-year-old can be forgiven for that.

When did you decide to run for public office?

In 1974, I was entering my senior year at the University of Maine at Farmington. I had followed the legislative election quite closely. The incumbent was re-elected but won with less than 60 percent of the vote. He ran against someone who in my opinion ran a lackluster campaign. I decided then that I would run against him in two years. I was out of college one year and had done some graduate work. I was 23 and my opponent was a 14-year incumbent who had been the majority leader of the House and chairman of the Taxation Committee. I beat him by a 2-1 margin.

Did you see any conflict between Christian principles and running for office?

I struggled mightily when I was a senior in high school and while in college with my love of politics, which I felt was God-given, and the messages I received that Christians shouldn't have anything to do with politics. I believed that the Lord had given me this interest and he had done so for a purpose. I believed then and still do that God has a purpose for our lives. I was told then—it was in the early to mid-seventies—that politics was a dirty business, a compromising business, and that I would lose my salvation. That scared me to death. Yet I had this strong desire and I couldn't reconcile what was wrong with my being in politics. My pastor urged me to attend Bible college and be a pastor or a missionary and give up this idea of being involved in any endeavor so worldly as politics.

How did you resolve this conflict?

While working at a summer camp in 1973—I was still in college—I became good friends with a student named Jack Diamond. He was a history major like me, had followed politics and was interested in current events. He was also a little older than I was, a little wiser, and had done some graduate work. I told him of my conflict. He gave me *Conflict and Conscience*, a book written by Sen. Mark Hatfield of Oregon, then governor of that state, a committed evangelical who served in the U.S. Senate with great distinction and remains a committed Christian. Hatfield described what it was like to be a Christian in politics, to be true to your convictions and to Christ, true to your faith in him and yet be effective in the world of politics. I reconciled my turmoil. I knew that God had called me to be involved in politics and I never looked back after that.

Has it been smooth sailing since?

Not at all. I ran successfully for the Legislature in 1976, was re-elected in 1978, and ran for the state Senate in 1980. I was still a Democrat at the time. I won the primary by 51-49 percent and then went on to lose the general election by about 5 points against an incumbent.

Then I tried to get my old House seat back in 1982. Beth and I were married by that time. So she got her baptism in politics. We were married in February. We had a primary in June which I lost. I said, "Look, I guess Lord, you want me out of politics. I had prayed before the election: If you want me in politics, let me win big. If you want me out of politics, let me lose big." I lost big. I lost the Senate, I lost the House, and I was convinced that I was through with politics.

I was pastoring a small church so Beth and I sought the Lord's will. We had a lot of discussions about what we should do because we decided to do just about everything together. "Jack," she said, "if you feel this is what the Lord wants you to do, I'm with you 100 percent." We decided that I would go to seminary, since I had never had any theological training.

I struggled mightily when I was a senior in high school and while in college with my love of politics, which I felt was God-given, and the messages I received that Christians shouldn't have anything to do with politics.

But you didn't go to seminary. What happened?

We discovered that we were pregnant with our first daughter. We are charter members of accidental parenthood. Beth was going to work to help me through seminary. I did an assessment: "You're in politics, you love it, you can do well, so you made some bad decisions in terms of your career, you lose, you get out of politics, you try to get back in, you get slapped down again so then you say, well okay, I'll go this way and then there's a door shut."

We were excited about having a child, of course, but that was going to have an impact on what I was going to do. So I said, "Lord, you're in control of my life and you have a plan, whatever it is you want me to do. If you don't want me to go to seminary, if you want me to stay at Second Baptist Church down on Water Street with a group of 40 or 50 people, I'll do so."

Two weeks after that I got a letter from the president of the board of directors of the Christian Civic League saying that Benjamin Bubar, who had been director for thirty years, was retiring because of poor health and wondering if I would be interested in the job.

So I responded and they sent a job description. And at the age of 30 I was hired as superintendent. I worked a year under Ben and then July 1, 1984, succeeded him. We changed the title to executive director, broadened our agenda, moved our headquarters from Waterville to Augusta and for the next nine years I had the absolute best time of my life.

What do you consider your major accomplishments as executive director of the league?

First, broadening our legislative agenda and rewriting our mission statement. I felt that for the League to be viable and develop, we had to do more than just address alcohol and gambling. We had to address education, economic and welfare issues, poverty and environmental issues.

That was not an easy sell with a group of very conservative people, most of whom were pretty used to having things stay pretty much the same.

I believed change was imperative if we were going to attract younger members and gain credibility among lawmakers and the media. Otherwise we were just going to exist on paper

because times change, issues change, the church changes and evolves, not in all respects we hope but in terms of priorities and moral issues. It's not the same as it was fifty years ago. We have to be on the cutting edge of these issues. The League signed on to that and that would be the most important accomplishment.

Second, attracting new members, the result of the new agenda. I've never done a demographic study, but we were adding six to seven hundred new families a year. More importantly, however, was the quality of the membership. We attracted people with different ideas, younger people with children who had not been drawn to the League before. We've arrested the aging process. The new executive director is 32.

Third, moving our headquarters from Waterville to Augusta (the state capital), where we were a four-minute walk from the statehouse. That made enormous difference in our effectiveness. Symbolism is very important in politics. How we were perceived by lawmakers and members of the press was important. When lawmakers and members of the press saw our sign out there right around the corner from the statehouse, it was as if the League had become a more pivotal player. Instead of driving an hour and then trying to find a parking place we could walk over at a moment's notice and our legislators knew that we could be there when needed. Many times a call came that a bill was reported out on the Senate floor earlier than expected. Can you be there? We were.

What do you see as the role of Christians in politics?

Every concerned Christian citizen needs to be involved in civic life. The extent of that involvement obviously would vary. I would be presumptuous to say that every Christian is called to be as involved as I have been. But every Christian is called to be a responsible citizen. Responsible citizenship for a Christian consists of being aware of the issues, reading the newspaper, voting, being discerning about candidates, their positions and qualifications. Not simply voting for someone just because they happen to be a Christian or because they happen to agree with them on one issue such as abortion, gay rights, or any other single issue.

Writing letters to the editors, either calling on the phone or writing to their representatives and senators. That's also what good citizens should do from time to time as the issues warrant it. A lot of Christians have never written. I used to ask in church how many had written to their congressman or legislators and 2 or 3 hands would go up. They say, "They don't read the letters," but they do read the letters. I know. I read the letters.

Do you think the church should support candidates for public office?

I don't advocate pastors endorsing candidates for office or being involved in partisan politics. First, there is the constitutional issue; but more importantly you compromise the integrity of the pastor as a spiritual leader to try to tell people how they ought to vote, who they ought to vote for. I wouldn't want any pastor who is supporting me to do that. I want them to encourage congregations to vote. Even when I was a lay preacher and in the legislature, all I would say the Sunday before election is "make sure you go out and vote. Who you vote for is between you and God; that's your business. But it is my business to encourage you to vote because that's your citizen responsibility and it's your responsibility before God to vote for the candidate of your choice no matter who that might be."

You compromise the integrity of the pastor as a spiritual leader if you try to tell people how they ought to vote.

What do you consider are two or three key issues in which Christians should be involved?

What's happening to the family is my biggest concern. It's the key issue Christians and the church need to be concerned about. The family and the pressures families are under and what society, our culture, and popular entertainment are doing to our family.

Some people tend to look to government for answers. That is the wrong place. We have to look within, we have to look to God. We have to look to the Scriptures. We have to look to our church, to our spiritual leadership for encouragement, edification, and instruction on how to be the kind of parents and children that God wants us to be.

If the family continues to disintegrate, our constitutional system will be threatened, our whole political system, our freedoms are going to be threatened because the family, not government, is the foundation of our Constitution. When the family erodes, family values, solidarity erodes.

Other issues Christians need to be concerned about are ethics and morality in government, law, and education. We need to be concerned about our public school systems. That's a big issue. Christians can make a difference. I tell people that the most important political office in the country is the local school board because that's where so many decisions are made that affect our children and their values and their future and their whole worldview. Teachers have children a lot longer than parents do today. So we need to pay attention to our schools.

We also need to be concerned about the environment and poverty, the welfare crisis we are in. It's a mess in this state, an expensive mess. Our system isn't working for the poor.

What are some of the planks in your gubernatorial platform?

I have called for a 30-percent across-the-board income tax cut because I am convinced that by cutting income tax rates we will spur eco-

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Personal Faith and Public Virtue

SOUL OF A NATION in America

Jasper S. "Jack" Wyman
Waterville, Maine

IT SEEMS well beyond dispute that religion—organized and otherwise—has been a prime force, for better and for worse, in shaping the history of civilization. Some of the greatest evils, and some of the greatest progress—have been made for centuries in the name of religion, in the name of God. So it seems that regardless of what one may personally think or believe about religion, one must concede the central role it has played throughout the course of human events.

A powerful influence

This is particularly true of the American experience. The Judeo-Christian religion, as expressed in the Holy Scriptures we refer to as the Bible, has had a profound impact upon our institutions, our culture, our values. Religious faith has helped to shape public policy and faith has largely defined how we Americans see ourselves as a nation—as "one nation under God"—and how we wish other nations to see us. In the words of the Declaration of Independence and our federal Constitution, we see clearly the prominence of religion as a fundamental human right and as a guarantor of other rights.

From the abolition of dueling and slavery to the pursuit of urban renewal and social and economic justice; from the manifest destiny that moved the country inexorably westward to the global leadership that founded the United Nations; from the controversy over the teaching of evolution in public schools to the movement for civil rights and racial reconciliation; and from dissent against an unpopular war to the current uncivil war over abortion, it's impossible not to appreciate the powerful influence of religious belief in charting this nation's course.

The founders of our republic were children of the Enlightenment. Most were not what we might consider today "practicing Christians." Nonetheless, the founders also recognized that strong religious faith was an integral part of preserving the republic.

It was a French visitor named Alexis de Tocqueville who described America as "a nation with the soul of a church." And so it has seemed, even to this day of cultural and moral upheaval, that we Americans remain an incurably religious people. We embrace religious values sincerely and are troubled when those beliefs are too easily challenged.

The founders of our republic, contrary to revisionist attempts by some conservative evangelicals to present them otherwise, were children of the Enlightenment. They possessed an almost unbounded confidence in human reason (this is especially true of Jefferson). Their religious faith, with rare exceptions, may be described as deistic. They believed in God as a Supreme Being, as the sovereign Creator. Most were not what we might consider today "practicing Christians" or devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Jefferson, in fact, categorically rejected the deity of Christ and rewrote his Bible to delete all references to the miraculous in the life of Jesus. Nonetheless, the founders also recognized—and took very seriously—the idea that strong religious faith was an integral part of preserving the new democratic republic.

In his farewell address to the na-

tion, George Washington said: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

"We have no government," declared John Adams, "armed in power capable of contending in human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other."

In addition to their deist leanings, the founders were also heavily influenced by the teachings of theologian John Calvin. Calvin believed, among other things, in "the total depravity of man." This awareness of human frailty manifested itself in the concession to special interest "factions," (as Madison referred to them) and the need for checks and balances in the Constitution. Madison, in the famous Federalist No. 51, wrote:

"Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interests of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other."

– John Adams

The religious roots of freedom

The founders' realistic view of human nature led them to frame a realistic government that has endured now for more than two centuries.

The authors of our Constitution understood that ethical values, based upon religious faith, formed the only sure foundation for the preservation of individual liberties. Above the pyramid in the great seal of the United States, is written in Latin: "God hath favored our undertaking." These wise men knew that oppression might survive without faith, but freedom could not. In the closing years of his life, as he looked out upon the gathering national conflict over slavery, Thomas Jefferson warned against separating freedom from its religious roots.

"God, who gave us life," Jefferson wrote, "gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever. . ."

It was the issue of slavery which brought the American nation to the inevitable moral struggle for its own soul. And it was Lincoln who sought to apply the ethical principles of the Declaration of Independence to the battle against the "peculiar institution." "I know there is a God," said Lincoln on the eve of his election to the presidency, "and I know he hates injustice. I see the storm coming, but I know his hand is in it."

The misuse of faith

Lincoln, although perhaps our most deeply religious president, understood the dangers of misusing religious faith in an effort to lend legitimacy to a particular political position. "The will of God prevails," he wrote. "In great contests, each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time."

Speaking of the North and South, Lincoln observed, in his second inaugural address: "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God and each invokes his aid against the other. . . the prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully."

It was perhaps Lincoln's genuine and deep humility in things religious that led him to issue the first proclamation for a National Day of Prayer and Fasting in 1863. It was an overtly religious statement:

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us then, to humble ourself before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

An American prophet

Exactly one hundred years later, in the sweltering August heat, a gifted black Baptist clergyman stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in our nation's capital, and before a crowd of two hundred thousand of his fellow countrymen, called America to a new repentance: to a moral and legal commitment to end racial segregation and discrimination and extend the promise of the Declaration of Independence,

the promise of justice and equality, to all people, regardless of color.

Martin Luther King's faith in Christ, his belief in God and the Bible were evident throughout his speech—perhaps the most eloquent oration of 20th-century America. King's address is replete with religious metaphors and illustrations. King quotes from the prophet Isaiah: "I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

King speaks of faith: "This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day."

In another passage of the speech, King invokes the prophet Amos: "No, no we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

King speaks of the "great trials and tribulations" of those demanding civil rights: "Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells, some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive." He closes his speech with this unforgettable passage: "When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children—black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics—will be able to join hands in singing the words of the old Negro spiritual "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

The words of this American prophet moved a national administration to place civil rights at the top of its domestic agenda and the United States was forever changed. The conscience of a country was aroused by the moral and spiritual appeal of a preacher.

The war in Vietnam divided the American religious community. Support and opposition to the conflict was forged in thousands of churches. On both sides, religious faith and the teachings of Scripture were invoked. Of course, religion has also fueled the latter day divisions over social issues, such as pornography and gay rights, and especially the bitter struggle over abortion. To this day, religious faith informs the public discourse, as it has throughout our history. As conservative fundamentalists and evangelicals have entered the political arena in an attempt to defend their values against what they sincerely believe is a pervasive undermining of moral authority, the debate over church and state—religion and politics—has been revived. And it is good that we discuss these concerns. For they are, as we have seen, central to American life.

Church and state: a balanced application

While there is not sufficient space to review the legal and political terrain of the First Amendment religion clause, it does seem that the founders were seeking to protect two concomitant rights: the freedom of individual conscience in matters religious and the right to express one's religious beliefs, unfettered by the state.

It is disturbing to witness a selective application of church and state separation with respect to political issues. It seems too often that if one concurs with the political views of the religious participant, participation is said to be legitimate, and even welcomed (i.e., anti-war protests or anti-nuclear protests). If, however, one may disagree with the political sentiment of the religious participant, then suddenly there is a church and state controversy present.

This response is neither just nor reasonable. We cannot afford the luxury, in a nation that prizes full and equal political participation on the part of all our citizens, to pick and choose when we will permit religious people to speak and act out of their conscience and faith, and when we will not. Such selective application of the First Amendment is ideologically transparent.

Second, this nation, because of its strong and deeply-rooted religious heritage, acts unwisely and dangerously in seeking to eliminate altogether religiously-based moral values from the public arena. The constitutional separation of church and state, which we must always cherish, has been too often illegitimately exaggerated to deny freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. The ludicrous court decision to banish high school invocations is just one recent example. Hopefully, the U.S. Supreme Court will return some semblance of reason to this matter.

Most Americans understand the importance of religious faith as a guide to public debate on public questions that, especially today, involve deeply-held personal convictions. The First Amendment was never intended by its authors to separate religious values from political discussion. There is a proper place for faith in politics. The mere presence of that faith does not crumple, nor even crack, the wall of separation. In fact, the liberty that the wall safeguards is not weakened, but strengthened by their permission of religious values into the public realm.

Equal standing in the public square

People of faith who enter the political marketplace have a responsi-

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How We CHURCH Can Bring DROPOUTS Them Back

Don M. Aycock
Memphis, Tenn.

WHAT COULD an army accomplish if half of its soldiers were absent?

Yet this is the situation many churches are facing. What happens to the people who have once served Christ but who have backed away and become inactive? How can these "dropouts" be reclaimed? Consider these people who left their churches:

Susan and Richard were volunteer youth leaders at their church. Then a new pastor came to their church, and he raised questions about some of Richard and Susan's methods. The couple slacked off in their church attendance until they stopped attending completely.

Bill felt devastated when his wife left him. He had been a deacon in his church and had taught a Bible class. After his divorce Bill told people that he felt too unworthy even to attend services at his church. Now he spends Sundays fixing up old cars.

The Jacksons had never felt so rejected as they did when the church members voted not to accept their plan for paying off a debt on the church parking lot. The Jacksons had spent months researching various financial options and had arrived at a plan which they thought would work easily. After the business meeting and the "no" vote, Mr. Jackson said, "If that's the way they are going to act, I won't try to do anything in this church again!" Though the Jacksons still attend worship some Sunday mornings, they have pulled back from their commitment to be actively involved.

UNFORTUNATELY, QUICK AND SIMPLE SOLUTIONS OFFER LITTLE HELP.

When the Capps family moved to Chicago, Illinois, they could not find a church that felt as "comfortable" as their old church in Atlanta, Georgia. They visited a number of churches, but after a while they stopped trying. Now they spend Sundays doing other things.

These situations are typical of what happens at churches of every denomination. Most churches have the names of people on their rolls who are "phantom" members—people who are seldom or never seen in church. In some denominations inactive members make up anywhere from 20 to 80 percent of the churches' membership rolls! How can we understand people who were once active in church but who have dropped out?

Understanding the problem

Why do people become inactive? Some become angry at what they perceive as heavy-handed leadership. Some people reject not faith itself but a particular interpretation about practicing the faith.

Others feel that they are unworthy of worshiping or serving God because of guilt resulting from their life circumstances. Still others feel abused, humiliated or rejected—separated from their churches. It seems as if the church is no longer their church.

Still other reasons why people become inactive include resistance to pressure, boredom, a self-imposed moratorium on doing anything for a while, insecurity and a misunderstanding of what the Christian faith is all about. The perceived coldness of a particular church may turn off some people. General fatigue keeps others from doing what they once did.

And we cannot ignore the spiritual factors in all of this. Some people who become inactive may not have been Christians to begin with: The Lord says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Others may be like the people whom the apostle Paul mentions who are "always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth."

And others may have been "sold" into being active at church by people who made promises of things that are not part of the Christian faith.

Genuine theological differences can also drive a wedge between people and their churches. The nature of the Bible, the place of spiritual gifts, the authority of the pastor—all of these and other conflicts exist in churches, causing many people who were once active to back away.

Looking for answers

Unfortunately, quick and simple solutions offer little help. How can we find out what is going on with the people who might be called dropouts? Consider the following actions:

• Ask them. Find out why they have dropped out. If we listen to people, and genuinely want to know how they feel, often they will tell us. Some will lash out in anger and bitterness and recount in detail how they feel. But most people do want to be involved in churches, and the first step in helping them to become active again is to listen to them. Forgiveness is the issue here: People who feel injured or ignored need to learn both to forgive and to be forgiven. The main goal is to help them spiritually, even if they never come to our church again.

• Keep in touch with them. This can be done in several ways. Research indicates that there are various "levels" of contact. A "cool" contact is a low-intensity contact that comes in writing. Form letters, the church newsletter, personal letters and cards establish contact without intruding on an individual's privacy. A survey among dropouts indicated that they do like to receive the church paper and personal cards.

A "mild" contact is a phone call. It is more intense than a card because it is immediate. People said they prefer calls from laypeople more than calls from clergy.

A "hot" contact is a face-to-face meeting such as a home visit. People who responded to the survey said that they do not mind casual visits from laypeople but that ministers should make appointments to visit.

Because each family or individual is different, we should think about what method to use. A card may be useful, whereas a personal visit may be offensive.

• Develop ways to help "ease" them back into the fellowship of the church. People who have gotten out of the habit of church-going may need help getting back to regular church attendance. A couples' retreat, a Bible class dinner, a singles' banquet or other special activities might help.

Consider two stories: Martha and Leonard were active in their church until a disagreement arose with the pastor. Unable to resolve the conflict, they left the church. People in the church kept in contact with them. When the pastor was called to serve another church, several people invited Martha and Leonard back. They attended a Fourth of July picnic and realized that they had missed the fellowship. Within a month they began attending regularly and within six months they accepted places of service.

Bill is gifted at skillfully dealing with dropouts. He takes the initiative to reach out to people. Bill is sensitive to their hurts and patiently listens to their stories. If he can offer specific counsel or assistance, he does. He tries not to take personally their expressions of anger. This man gently wins the confidence of people who drop out, then leads them back into the fellowship of the church. If people decide not to return to their former church, Bill encourages them to find a new place to worship.

God wants his children to gather together to worship him. When people drop out of our churches, we need to encourage them to become active and involved in serving the Lord once again: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." ❑

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Nine to Five

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always seems to be an important part of that strategy.) But there's no quick fix or easy answer. Secularism will continue to reign supreme in our culture until Christians grasp that God's calling impacts our jobs and how we do them. We Christians who claim the Protestant heritage of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the other Reformers need to take as seriously as they did, what the Bible teaches about the role of our work in God's purposes and plans. And Christians need to reenter those vocations and callings we have abandoned during the last sixty years.

Tomorrow, when you go to work, remember that what you do matters to God. He cares about your job and wants you to do it in partnership with him. You don't have to be a doctor, a lawyer, a politician, or a clergyman for your work to be important in God's eyes. He cares about the work that doctors, lawyers, politicians, and clergymen do. But your work is just as important to him. ❑

What's Cooking in the New Age Kitchen?

Part Two

Origin of the Recipes

Andy Bjorklund
Seattle, Wash.

A MODEL for social change? Or a global conspiracy? The New Age offers us a diversity of ideas, jargon, practices, celebrities, organizations, campaigns, literature, products, and more. While some regard this as merely the results of our media saturated, consumer-driven culture, many New Agers rely on their network to meet deep personal needs. In our first article, the detectable philosophical and religious dimensions of New Age activity were introduced. A large number of observers, however, prefer to call this the New Age *Movement* as it so closely resembles the classic sociological model for social change. Other analysts warn us that it is really a carefully orchestrated global conspiracy leading to the prophetic confrontations previewed in the pages of the New Testament. Which assessment is right? Actually, each one of these views has merit.

As Christians in an age of increasing pluralism, we need to be concerned about the spiritual implications of New Age involvement. Whereas a social movement definition is one of the more accurate labels, it neglects the deeper discernment issues of the spiritual marketplace. Consequently, for the sake of this series I refine the New Age definition as follows: *the ancient traditions of occultism disguised as a newer form of humanism driven by a vision of global unity and unlimited human power.*

Stirring for uniqueness

As an example of social transformation, the New Age realm looms pervasively for at least two reasons: convergence and magnitude. Similar to a wilderness water cycle, the New Age Movement is reflected by the many sectors of society under its influence. New Age thinking is now becoming more visible in the practical applications of education, politics, business, science, and the arts. Current technological advances allow the New Age Movement to advance its global aspirations even more rapidly.

Mixing the ingredients

Although dozens of sources for the New Age Movement can be identified, we will examine six of the most influential. Its 19th-century ancestors include the Theosophical Movement, the Mental Healing Movement, and the establishment of parapsychology as a specialized field of scientific study. These events were followed in the 20th century by the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s, developments in humanistic psychology, and the rise of mystical science. Let's look at these more closely to gain a fuller appreciation of the New Age advances.

East goes west

With the expansion of European colonial powers in the 19th century came an increasing fascination of the upper classes of the West with the Eastern religions. Among these were Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), a Russian spirit medium, who traveled worldwide and borrowed heavily from the Hinduism of India. She blended concepts from the occult and Eastern religions into her own system called theosophy. A worldwide network of the Theosophical Society maintains her legacy today. For almost a century theosophical literature has promoted the ancient hope for the upward evolution of humanity through occult powers. The presence of occult and Hindu doctrines in New Age beliefs is clearly evident in its monistic (all is one) and pantheistic (the one is divine) themes.

Mind over matter

Due largely to the explorations of Phinehas P. Quimby (1802-1866) of Maine, the concept of mind over mat-

ter techniques for healing emerged. Quimby's eager followers systematized his teachings into lectures and literature which contributed to the Mental Healing Movement in America. Mary Baker Eddy and her related Christian Science doctrines; Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, founders of the Unity School of Christianity; and Ernest Holmes who established religious science, were descendants of the Mental Healing Movement. Each of these traditions reflects the gnostic preoccupation with the reality of the mind being superior to the physical realm. Many related mind science organizations contribute to the New Age theme of altering one's surroundings with the right mental and spiritual techniques.

The dean of psychics

Reactions to the alienation of the Industrial Revolution in the West helped to initiate the 19th-century Age of Romanticism. Within this unique expression was a preoccupation with the subjective orientation, emotional intensity, and a fascination with the supernatural. This helped to trigger a new wave of occult indulgence. Spirit mediums and seances became publicly popular. Sir Arthur Conlan Doyle, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and even President Abraham Lincoln were among the many patrons. In due time, the educated elite of Europe and the U.S. initiated the scientific study of paranormal phenomenon. As a result, the Society for Psychical Research was first established in London in 1882. Extensive research efforts by J.B. Rhine at Duke University from 1927-1965, established the use of related techniques as a systematic discipline. Largely through Rhine's influence, psychical research became known as parapsychology, along with its own entrenched vocabulary. The intriguing characteristics of psychic phenomenon—extra sensory perception, out of body experiences, and similar encounters continue to charm the masses today. Such explorations have aided the New Age messages that death is an illusion and that any technique that unlocks hidden powers is desirable.

The New Age disguises ancient traditions of occultism as a new form of humanism.

Campus earthquakes

The 1960s represented a turbulent era of fear, anger, and frustration over the failures of modern society to meet deeper human needs and maintain the integrity of previously respected traditions. The unchallenged affluence of the post-World War 2 prosperity boom led the U.S. crashing into institutional corruption, the Vietnam War, a new dimension in substance abuse, another wave of racial violence, and related spiritual confusion. Rather than trust in previously accepted authorities such as the church, universities, or the governments for solutions, many rebelled by seeking out alternative sources: the East and the inner-self. Maharaj Ji, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and Sri Chinmoy were but a few in a stream of shrewd Eastern enterprisers taking advantage of a troubled society hungry for spiritual reality. Their Eastern approach also emphasized a subjectivism which comfortably mixed with the adjacent Western rebellion. Mind altering drugs, alternative morality, and new self-improvement techniques proliferated. Mystical persuasions and related lifestyles were like a softening salvo for the New Age invasion. Such orientations continue to bolster the acceptance of New Age themes. Among these are the aspiration to write your own future through your inherently divine capacities or reincarnating in another life if your divinity needs adjustment.

Theories X,Y, and Z

The history of modern psychology could be described as four successive waves. In the first wave of psychoanalytical thinking (a la Sigmund Freud, 1856-1939) human behavior was largely explained by the subconscious mind. The second wave brought the behaviorists (a la B.F. Skinner, 1904-1990) who emphasized external stimulation as the primary determinant rather than the subconscious realm. Although both schools achieved large notoriety, they also lacked recognition of human values and purpose. Enter the third wave of humanistic psychology (a la Abraham Maslow, 1908-1970) which utilized scientific validity to elevate the self-actualization of the individual.

The self-actualization emphasis merged with the self-indulgent climate of the 1960s. Humanistic psychology then paved the road for the Human Potential Movement. As the smoke of Vietnam faded, the 1970s became the era of radical politics plugging into radical profiteering. The primary themes of the latter were (1) the only certainty in life is change, (2) each individual has an *unlimited* capacity for change, and (3) reality is determined by the individual's own experiences. With the Human Potential Movement came a burst of cult-like programs such as Silva Mind Control, est (Erhard Seminar Training), Lifespring, and others. These lucrative schemes reaped millions of dollars from clients seeking a way to alter their individual realities.

The fourth wave of modern psychology is emerging under the banner of transpersonal psychology. As parapsychology encouraged scientists to formally accept the study of the supernatural, so too is transpersonal psychology doing with psychologists. With an enthusiasm for the mystical perspective, transpersonal psychologists are campaigning for *unitive consciousness, peak experiences, oneness, cosmic awareness, and transcendental phenomenon* among their peers.

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DYSFUNCTION in the Church?

Linda Leavitt
Deer Isle, Maine

BECAUSE I did not grow up in church and our home was not a Christian home, I used to worry that I would be handicapped in my role as a pastor's wife. But through this handicap, God has made me aware of some particular struggles that afflict some congregations.

In most dysfunctional families there is usually an obvious problem that the members of that family are trying to pretend does not exist. In my family the problem was alcoholism. My father was an alcoholic. And for years he could not, would not, acknowledge that he was an alcoholic. Not only would he not admit it but neither would the rest of our family. And we all played our own roles in assuring the problem was covered up.

My mother's role in our family was the classic enabler. She was always finding excuses for my father's "illness" and thus giving him excuse to drink even more. My oldest brother tried to step into my father's shoes, taking over the responsibilities of the provider. He tried his best to put food on the table when my father had not worked for days, because of his "problem." This provided for the family, which appears a good thing to do, but this also allowed my father to continue in his own irresponsibility.

My older sister was the escapist. She lived in, and presented to the world, the fantasy that our family was just perfect. And, if there was a problem, she could "fix" it by being a better person, presenting a better picture for all to see.

Because I was the third child, my choice of roles was becoming limited. And, my personality being what it is, I took on the task of pointing out to everyone else that there really was a problem. And I would try to force the rest of my family to recognize the problem. But in their eyes, I became the problem. The focus was taken off the real issue and placed on me.

As other siblings came along, eight of us in all, they found and filled their own roles, based on their own personalities. It wasn't until years later that some of us were able to look at and address the problems in such a way that healing could begin in our lives. Several members of my family are still struggling, still denying the problem really existed. This is a brief example, from my own family, defining what dysfunction is.

Dysfunction can impact churches

Coming from this family background, my early Christian experience was filled with joy and great relief to finally be a part of a "family" (the church) that would be ideal; that would be what a family was really supposed to be. And not coming from a church background, the only example of the church I had to base my premise upon was Scripture. And in Scripture, the church sounded like near perfection to me!

As I matured in my faith, following my husband into full-time ministry and becoming a pastor's wife, I began to see many similarities between church families and the dysfunctional family I was raised in.

In many churches I found there were issues, or problems, that no one wanted to address. The problems ranged from control and division to materialism or even false doctrine. Sometimes there was even blatant sin. But no one wanted to acknowledge the problem existed.

Various members of the church would play similar roles to those that members of my family used in trying to cover up the problem, to enable the problem to continue. Other members, much like my brother, would take over more responsibility to provide for the weak areas brought about by the problem. And other members, much like my sister, would "believe" the problem was not there, or surely would go away. For them everything

was just as it ought to be. Then, of course, there were those who would try to get the church to focus on the problem, and in turn become the focus themselves as if they were the problem. And if the church could just get rid of these troublemakers there could be peace and harmony once more!

Step one: Admit the problem exists

These problems and the way many congregations choose to deal, or not deal with them, were, and are, similar to the dysfunction that many families struggle with. And, like those outside my own family who were able to identify our problem quite clearly, often those coming from outside our own church families are able to see the same!

In churches as well as families, the first step to dealing with any problem, flaw, or sin, is to admit that it exists. This in itself is a biblical principle. We must acknowledge and confess our sins before we can ever repent, turn to the Savior, and find forgiveness and healing. This "sin problem" can be personal. It can be congregational, as were the problems in several of the churches Christ addressed in the first three chapters of Revelation.

Is there some dysfunction in your family, or in your church family? Have you wondered what is keeping you from being set free? In John 8:31-32, Jesus, speaking to those who had believed in him said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" And then as Paul writes in Ephesians 4:14-15, "We will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." ❑

Melrose group puts program kit lessons into action

APPROXIMATELY nine women (six of them are energetic ladies in their eighties) have appreciated the WHFMS 1994 program packet, "A Place of Refuge." After each meeting, the group has sought opportunities to serve in their church. "Parenting Aging Parents" was the theme of one lesson, after which cards were sent to those in the church who are caretakers and also to those who are cared for. The devotional titled, "I'm So Lonesome I Could Die," moved the women to remember a parishioner in a nursing home and one in a rehabilitation center with a round-robin note signed by all.

Another devotional focused on "Being a Worker At Home" and the ladies desired to pray for and do something for their pastor's wife, who diligently home schools her children. One of the ladie's daughters owns a florist shop and she arrived at the study with a beautiful plant. Another came with an "orchard," and both were delivered to the pastor's wife with a note of thanksgiving for her life. One lesson highlighted "A Place of Refuge for the Single Parent," and cards were written to three single moms and time was spent in prayer for them. "When Others Need Our Help" reminded these zealous ladies of a single mom whose children had been ill and Bible stickers were purchased and cards sent to the children.

"For Those Who Feel They Don't Belong" reminded us of missionaries learning a new language and inspired the women to remember them in prayer and with a card and note. The lesson titled "Suddenly Single" was relevant to many in the study, as they shared how the church comforted them when they became widows and how we can do likewise to those going through divorce or the death of a spouse. Cards were sent to several who were experiencing such situations.

Our Tuesday morning lesson material concluded with a "Mission Spotlight," after which a note was written to Marion Damon in India from the Melrose church. A "welcome home" card was mailed to Sayoko Crabtree, a member of the Melrose congregation, who will soon return from a two-year short-term mission project in Japan. A final missionary project was to send some bath towels to a young man who grew up in the church and now serves as a missionary in Poland. His mom just returned from a visit and said that bath towels are not accessible in his area, and towels are the size of a dish towel. His mom recently attended his Christian wedding (the bride is from Poland) and the wedding gifts mostly consisted of a flower from each attender! Theirs is the opposite of the way we, in the United States, spend money for weddings!

The ladies attending this Bible study are prayer warriors and several of them have the energy to drive through several communities to attend. "A Place of Refuge" has provided avenues of ministry that they could assist with and we are grateful for those who took the time to write such relevant devotionals. ❑

Reported by Nancy Pritchard, study leader for the women's group at Faith Evangelical Church (A.C.) in Melrose, Mass.

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bility to act and speak responsibly. It is small wonder that millions of Americans are genuinely concerned when Christian leaders speak about remaking the United States into a "Christian nation"; when they argue that "only the right have rights"; when they argue that they are seeking "dominion" over secular power. Despite the historic fact that this nation was never overtly Christian to start with, such foolish talk reflects a disrespect for American pluralism and diversity of belief. Being a Christian, or being religious, gives no citizen the right to dictate public policy or attempt to seize control of the political process or condemn a political adversary to hell because he or she happens to disagree.

When Lincoln, during the Civil War, was asked whose side God was on, he replied: "My concern is not that God be on our side, but that we be on his." Christian activists would do well to take that sentiment to heart. Those of us whose faith leads us to become involved must recognize that every citizen has the equal right to participate, for any reason, no matter if they are religious or not, liberal or conservative; Democratic, Republican or Independent; Jew, Catholic, or Protestant; or agnostic, atheist, or Muslim. The Constitution of this country gives all of us equal standing in the public square.

The sincere belief that we are doing God's will does not foreclose debate. When we are too certain to declare "thus saith the Lord," we claim an unfair advantage over those who dare to take exception. Religious citizens who choose to become engaged in politics must show respect, kindness, tolerance, generosity and a humble spirit. If people of faith want to influence, they should avoid unnecessary antagonism; if they wish to play a role in molding the direction of public policy, then they should reject coercion and focus instead on persuasion. For hearts and minds that are forced shut can never be won.

There is a place for religiously-grounded moral values, and religious faith itself, in the public life of our nation. Nevertheless, we must, as a people, be ever vigilant to guarantee the freedom of belief, the freedom of conscience, embodied in simple eloquence within the First Amendment: Congress shall enact no law respecting an establishment of religion, nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof. No citizen can, or should be, compelled to any belief, sectarian or otherwise. The First Amendment protects every person's freedom of religion. It also protects every person's freedom from religion, and this is of equal importance.

When it comes to religious freedom, all Americans should follow the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as we would have others do unto us." That is, respond to their beliefs, their rights, their practices—with the same sensitivity, same consideration, and same respect that we want our fellow citizens to respond to our own beliefs, our own rights, and our own practices.

Freedom of religion is not subject to debate. It is not subject to negotiation. As James Madison expressed it in his *Memorial and Remonstrance*: "The religion, then, of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is, in its nature, an unalienable right."

To be fully understood and appreciated all freedom, including religious liberty, must be seen as indivisible. Unless it is extended fully to all, it is secure for none. No matter how controversial or unpopular a religious minority may be, its right to faith and practice must be accorded full respect and protection. Because we live in America and because freedom, including religious liberty, is the American way. The religious liberty clause of the First Amendment forms the bulwark of all American freedoms. For in this nation we prize freedom of belief, freedom of heart and mind, and freedom of the soul above all else.

If every citizen in this land does not have the free and unshackled right to follow the dictates of his or her own conscience, no other right really matters. This is particularly true with respect to the personal and sacred realm of religious faith.

Enriching our dialogue

We must not be a theocracy—that would deny freedom and American pluralism. Neither must we prohibit religious faith, and the moral values it represents, from our public life. That would impoverish debate and limit our shared understanding.

Somewhere between the oppression of theocratic totalitarianism and the anti-religious secular extreme of the Naked Public Square rests the positive role of religiously-informed moral influence upon public political debate. It is an influence best undertaken in humility and with a healthy skepticism as to our own infallibility. Still, such influence has the potential for enriching our dialogue and clarifying our choices as a nation.

This role, appropriately assumed with thoughtful balance, reason, and with a commitment to persuasion rather than coercion, will offer valuable and needed assistance in helping us find our way through the exciting remaining days of this decade. ❑

Jasper S. "Jack" Wyman is active in the Waterville, Maine, Advent Christian Church and was a Republican candidate for governor in Maine. These remarks were delivered at the summer scholar's program at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, on Thursday, June 25, 1992.

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Gurus in the test tube

The unification of Western science and Eastern mysticism observed in psychology can be found in other branches of science as well due to surrounding cultural trends. Fritjof Capra's landmark work, *The Tao of Physics* (1975) provides the general population with a launching pad for New Age transitions. Based on speculations about relativity and quantum theories and related laboratory research, Capra's primary message is that everything in the universe is interconnected in a "basic oneness." A subsequent chorus of sympathetic researchers and authors have helped to mold this continuing proclamation. From these the New Age theme of the universe being comprised on one divine substance garners growing favor.

The infatuation with interconnectedness has also revealed itself in the Holistic Health Movement of recent decades. Reinforced by the shortcomings of the traditional modes of healing in the West, the holistic health community has been gaining converts through many alternative methods. Some holistic health practices are valuable and effective. Others, however, pose grave risks for the patient. Among these are psychic healing, altered states of consciousness, and some bioenergetic therapies. One of the greatest New Age fallacies in this arena is the assumption that all supernatural experiences are beneficial. Such a perspective fails to consider the reality of evil and deception.

These are some of the primary sources of New Age popularity. Other subcurrents include thanatology (the study of death and dying), neopaganism, the environmental movement, and globalism. Their interaction with New Age activity is so great that it can be difficult determining which is a source and which is a result. In our next installment we will examine how New Age doctrines are becoming mainstream and how they contrast with a biblical explanation of the universe. Join us in the next article for another visit to the New Age kitchen! ❑

Andy Bjorklund is a veteran observer of pseudo-Christian and non-Christian religious movements including the New Age Movement. He and his wife Pauline live in Seattle, Wash.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

September

1 Praise God that **Karen Rigney** has arrived in Japan to begin language school and career missionary service.

2 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they communicate the work of Advent Christian missions while home on furlough.

3 Pray for **Margaret Helms** as she provides leadership in West Kobe, Japan while the Lays are on furlough.

4 Praise God for a growing Advent Christian Church in **mainland China**.

5 Pray that the gospel will continue to be proclaimed throughout **China**.

6 Pray that God will raise up new Advent Christian missionaries for service next year in **India**.

7 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Barbara White**, **Beryl Joy Hollis**, and **Marion Damon** continue to have as they train and develop leaders in India.

8 Pray that Advent Christians in **India** will continue to touch lives for Jesus Christ as they encounter growing opposition from Muslims and Hindus.

9 Pray that God will use Advent Christian national missionaries **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam**, **James and Mercy Devadasson**, and **Ruth Devairakkam** to communicate the gospel to people in Malaysia.

10 Pray that Christians in **Malaysia** will find strength and courage to speak about Jesus Christ in this officially Islamic nation.

11 Praise God for the growing number of Advent Christian congregations involved in **short-term missions**.

12 Pray that God's direction will be sensed as Advent Christian missions prepares to open a new mission field in **Honduras**.

13 Praise God for the short-term ministry carried out by young people in Honduras and Los Angeles through **Project Timothy**.

14 Pray for **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** as they complete their furlough and retire in the Seattle, Washington area this fall.

15 Pray for Advent Christian **urban outreaches** in Memphis, Tenn.; Jacksonville, Fla.; San Francisco, Calif.; Miami, Fla.; and Dover, Fla.

16 Praise God for the strong Christian faith and testimony that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** bring to their ministry with the Advent Christian Church in the inner-city of Memphis.

17 Pray for students at **Oro Bible College** in the Philippines as they prepare to serve in pastoral, church planting, and other vocational Christian ministries.

18 Pray for **David Vignali** as he coordinates several areas of Advent Christian ministry in the Philippines.

19 Praise God that the **Philippine Advent Christian Conference** has seen growth and development during its first forty years of ministry.

20 Pray that Advent Christian ministry and outreach throughout **Asia** will continue to grow during the next ten years.

21 Praise God for the partnership of our sister churches in **New Zealand** in our Asian mission work.

22 Pray for the **Conditional Immortality Fellowship** in New Zealand as they proclaim "Life Only in Christ" within their nation.

23 Praise God for the short-term ministry of **Russell Giasson**, **Frank Jewett**, and **Aloysius Okon** with Advent Christian leaders and congregations in Nigeria.

24 Pray that Advent Christians in **Liberia** will sense God's strength and protection as they live and work in that war-torn nation.

25 Pray that God will strengthen and encourage **Advent Christian pastors** in Canada and the United States as they face the pressures and stresses of pastoral ministry.

26 Pray that God will strengthen **your pastor** as he communicates the Word of God and works to provide direction for your congregation.

27 Praise God for the Christian commitment of students studying at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico.

28 Pray for **Alberto Gomez** as he continues to provide leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in the El Florido area east of Tijuana, Mexico.

29 Pray that God will raise up church planters to establish Advent Christian congregations in **Mexico**.

30 Pray for World Missions director **Harold Patterson** as he seeks God's guidance and leading for the work of Advent Christian missions.

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nomic growth and increase state revenues so that we can address these problems. As a Republican I am also concerned about poverty, mental health issues, how we are treating the mentally ill and mentally retarded, and deeply concerned about the other issues I have mentioned. I won't repeat those. But I believe that the restoration of economic vitality in Maine and improving our competitive position in the world economy begins with cutting taxes.

To pay for that I have called for a reduction of the state work force by 20 percent over four years. Maine state government is too big. It spends too much money, taxes are too high, and we have not set priorities. We have steadfastly refused to do that because it is so difficult. We have chosen the easy way, passing a temporary tax for a couple of years to fund programs then discontinuing the funding. We fund programs for the mentally ill one year, for example, then six months later we stop. We're pulling the rug out from under them. Totally unconscionable, totally irresponsible fiscally and morally.

What we need to say is, "This is what state government needs to do." I have my priority list and the mentally ill and mentally retarded are at the top of the list. The poor, especially poor children, are next. We need to make sure that we have systems in place to care for those who cannot care for themselves and then we need to make some cuts in other areas, the educational bureaucracy and welfare, for example.

Welfare is a system that isn't working. To pay for the tax cuts we have to abolish the welfare system and come up with a brand-new system that is more cost-effective and much more helpful. I have proposed a two-year program of benefits including job training and child care to help during transition and ultimately offer welfare through the private sector. I think people in this country support that approach. It's ironic because some people want to abolish our health-care system which is the best in the world and some people want to tinker around the edges of the worst welfare system in the world. They ought to be doing the opposite. We ought to abolish the welfare system, keep our health-care system, reform that, and come up with a brand-new welfare system. I think we are spending way too much money on the educational bureaucracy, way too much money on school administration and overhead.

Turning the business climate around again, cutting taxes, easing the regulatory burdens on business and industry are steps that have to be taken to restore our economic health.

Do you see these positions being consistent with Christian principles?

Yes, I believe that free enterprise, capitalism, and economic competition are consistent with the Christian ethic. I say that because God is concerned with our quality of life. He is concerned with our happiness. And while it is true that material goods never provide the kind of happiness that only our faith in God and our relationship with Jesus Christ can provide, it is nevertheless a moral imperative on the part of Christians to see that our economic system in this country is organized in a just and equitable way, in a way that maximizes opportunities for individuals to grow, to achieve and to gain security for themselves and their families for which God has held them responsible. A free enterprise system—while not perfect—is the best system ever devised on earth by humankind to achieve those goals. It is very much consistent with the Christian ethic and worldview that we have a chance for economic prosperity, economic growth and development.

Lately there have been a number of racial incidents in Maine. That used to be a rarity. Do you have any thoughts on why?

It's a much greater issue than what we think because we are in a state that is predominately white and Anglo Saxon. It is much easier to be tempted to look with suspicion on those who are different from us, have a different color skin, different nationality, different religion.

I had a dinner meeting with the mayor of Lewiston. The mayor of Lewiston is not only a Democrat, he is an African-American and he's the mayor of the second biggest city in the state. He is a man who came from Newark, N.J., went to Bates College in Lewiston, and decided to make his home there in a predominantly white community.

Although Lewiston is heavily Franco-American there are very few African-Americans. We talked about that experience. He said that people recognize you right away and they don't forget you. But he said he had found that over time the people of Lewiston came to accept him and to recognize the contributions that he had made.

It was moving to hear the account of how he ran for mayor. Because people came up to him and said, you really ought to run for mayor you have made such a great contribution to the community. And so we have that in Lewiston and we have the people in Lewiston rejecting a gay rights ordinance almost by a 70-30 margin yet two weeks later electing a member of a minority mayor of their city.

Yet we go up the road a few miles to Pittsfield and we see young people involved in racially inspired incidents of violence. So we have a long way to go before we achieve the kind of tolerance and the kind of compassion and respect that allowed John Jenkins to be elected mayor of the second biggest city of this state as a black man.

As governor I would be committed to finding a common vision for the common good. I think that is one of the things a governor can do. A governor can exercise moral leadership, helping to define what this common vision is for the common good and trying to bring us together to understand that despite our differences we are all God's children. He loves us all.

Do you think the kind of prejudice that has surfaced recently will carry over to a Christian running for office?

Prejudice is wrong if it is directed toward a black man, a Christian, a Jew or a woman or against a Catholic. But there is prejudice. John Kennedy faced that when he ran for president in 1960. I paraphrase him when asked about the issue. Kennedy said in 1960 to a group of southern Baptist clergymen when he faced the religious issue, "I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the candidate for president who happens also to be Catholic and you should not vote for me or against me because of my religion because it is not relevant." What I have said is I am not the Christian candidate for governor. I am the candidate for governor who happens to be a Christian and you should not vote for or against me because of my faith. I am not making that an issue.

It's an issue with me personally in terms of my political philosophy. But I have invited people to evaluate me as a candidate for governor based on my qualifications, based on my knowledge and experience and my stance on the issues and my values, not on what church I attend or what I believe about God or the Bible or Jesus Christ. I am not running on that kind of platform.

If the family continues to disintegrate, our constitutional system will be threatened, our whole political system, our freedoms are going to be threatened because the family, not government, is the foundation of our Constitution.

I think one's religion, one's faith and how one worships God is a personal, individual matter. It is not an issue for public policy discussion. There cannot be any religious test for holding public office. The Constitution says that.

I am grateful for support always for any reason but I hope people will vote for me because they believe I am qualified to serve as governor and not simply because I share their faith. That's important to me. There are Christians who are supporting other candidates and that is fine, if that's what they want to do. ❑

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Advent Christian

WITNESS

September 1994

Sharing the BURDEN

CARING FOR YOUR PASTOR

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In this excerpt from his new book, Advent Christian pastor Les Lawrence draws our attention to God's prophetic work and its impact on our lives.

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photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Servants in a Specialist's Age

PASTORS ARE human. Think about that for a moment. Yes, pastors have been called by God to preach, teach, and provide spiritual leadership and care for the congregation. Yes, pastors are called to lead by the example of their lives. But pastors are human. Like all individuals, they have strengths and weaknesses. They face the same problems and struggles you and I do. They make mistakes. And no two pastors are the same.

Pastoral ministry in the 1990s is hard work. We ask pastors to be generalists in a specialist's age. And the demands that local churches place upon their pastors have dramatically increased. Think of what people expect from their pastors: Good preaching and teaching, counseling skills, administrative ability, good interpersonal qualities, the ability to minister in crisis situations such as hospital visitation and funerals, effective leadership skills, the ability to articulate vision and direction for a congregation and motivate people to participate, and the list goes on. In vocations like medicine, education, and law—doctors, teachers, and lawyers are trained to specialize. Heart specialists don't do kidney surgery. Lawyers who specialize in business law don't practice family law. And high-school English teachers rarely teach math.

It's different in pastoral ministry, especially in smaller congregations. Someone once joked that the church is the only organization with 100 employers and one employee. And each of those 100 folks has a different set of expectations and opinions of the pastor. Add that to the diverse number of tasks we ask pastors to be competent in and its no wonder why pastoral ministry is one of the most stressful, demanding vocations of the 1990s. Pastoral ministry is hard work. It demands many hours. Stress, burnout, and fatigue have caused many good pastors to leave the Christian ministry. God's kingdom work is damaged when that happens. That damage affects not only the pastor, but the pastor's spouse and children. It also harms the work of the local church.

Pastors not only face the demands of their work, they must deal with ministry in an increasingly secular society. Henri Nouwen puts it well when he writes that Christians in general and pastors in particular live with a sense of "historical dislocation." While the Scriptures clearly stress the high calling of pastoral work, it's seen by our culture as irrelevant and stuffy. Postmodern America often views pastors as harsh, unfeeling, money-hungry charlatans who try to force us to live by a set of archaic standards. It's not easy communicating the Christian faith in a culture where the idea of truth is considered a relic from days gone by.

Pastors need our support

You and I need a realistic understanding of how difficult pastoral ministry is in our time. One of the most important tasks that we as Advent Christians face today is making sure that we support and affirm the pastors who give so much to us. There are several practical ways we can do that. The most important is prayer. When was the last time you prayed for your pastor? Pray that God will give your pastor the spiritual strength and wisdom needed for the many tasks of pastoral work he or she must do. Pray for your pastor's spouse and children. Pray that God will give your pastor and congregation a clear sense of direction in your ministry to your community.

After prayer, make sure that your congregation has clarified its expectations for your pastor. Accountability is an important New Testament principle but no one can satisfy the unspoken expectations of thirty, fifty, or a hundred employers. Unspoken expectations can create mistrust

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Sharing the BURDEN

Caring for Your Pastor

Paul A. Cedar

"We are hurting and bleeding—ready to quit."

THOSE WERE the words a young pastor shared with me a few days ago. He and his wife are hanging on to their ministry by the tips of their spiritual fingernails.

Overall, their ministry was going very well. The church was growing numerically—primarily as a result of the addition of new Christians who were being reached by evangelical ministries led by the pastor. In addition, increasing numbers of church members were becoming involved in discipleship groups and were growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Most of the church family were elated at what God was doing in their midst.

However, there was a small segment of longtime members who were not at all happy. They had been in charge of things in the past. Now they sensed that they were losing control. They longed for what they considered to be the "good old days" when the church was a small, close-knit family unit. They held the pastor responsible for the changes, and they saw only one way to resolve the situation—get rid of the pastor.

Although they were small in number, they were much greater in their influence. As they began to verbalize their dissatisfaction, they appealed to others to join them. Accusations and rumors began to fly. Persons who had not attended the church for years were enlisted. Soon there was a "movement" to oust the pastor.

Great disruption and division filled the church. Although the pastor tried to provide spiritual leadership, and although he sought to bring peace and harmony to the situation, nothing seemed to help. Now, he had reached the end of his human endurance. His wife was encouraging him to resign. Even his district superintendent was not certain that he should stay.

How tragic!

The throw-away-pastor syndrome

I wish this were an isolated story. Unfortunately, it is taking place over

and over again across this nation. Although the script may vary from place to place, the bottom line is the same. Increasing numbers of pastors are under attack—and so are their families!

What are we to do? How are we to respond to this "throw-away-pastor" syndrome that seems to be gaining more momentum each day?

Perhaps no other segment of our society is being abused so badly and is suffering so deeply than are pastors and their families. The tragedy is that most of this persecution and mistreatment is not coming from outside the church. Instead, our enemy is enlisting the services of men and women who are in the church—many of the persecutors are leaders and/or influential members.

It should not be so. It *must* not be so!

Again I pose the question, "What can we do?"

In response, let me make several specific suggestions which I pray God will use to help us minister more effectively to our pastors and their families. Let's begin by reviewing some of the biblical responsibilities of the pastor.

As surely as our pastors will someday give an account to God for how they have cared for us, so we will be accountable for how we have cared for them.

Pastors are called and gifted to be spiritual leaders. Our pastors have been called and gifted by God to serve as spiritual leaders in Christ's church (Ephesians 4:11). They are to follow Christ in all that they do and to lead with his unique leadership model as servant leaders (Matthew 20:25-28). They are to lead in the direction that Christ is leading them (1 Corinthians 11:1). Pastors should lead with a humble, gentle, servant style of leadership which is to be an example to all of us (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Pastors are not in charge of the church. Nor is the church board. Nor are the church officers. Nor are those who contribute the most financially. Nor are the faithful church workers. Nor are the visionary persons who "started" the church. Nor are any denominational leaders or judicatories.

Only one person should rule over the affairs of a local church. There is only one ultimate leader and authority in the church.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. He is our leader. It is never "our" church. It is always his church!

Our pastors should lead us to Christ so that we can seek him and his will together. That is how local churches should govern their own affairs—under the lordship of Jesus Christ and by his direction—with the spiritual unity which only Christ can bring to our lives and our decisions!

Pastors are accountable to God in a special way. All of us are accountable to God, but pastors are subject to a special accountability. For example, the apostle James wrote that those who teach will be judged by God more strictly than others (James 3:1). Peter added that when Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, appears, he will bring his reward with him for those who serve as shepherds of his flock (1 Peter 5:4).

Through his prophet Ezekiel, the Lord warned his shepherds to take care of his flock and to not merely provide for themselves (Ezekiel 34:2). He asserts that he will hold them accountable for the care of his flock (Ezekiel 34:10).

Pastors are accountable to God for their ministry—for how they love and care for his sheep. They are to follow the example of Jesus—the Good Shepherd who was willing to lay down his life for his sheep (John 10:11).

Pastors are to be servants of Christ and his church. Pastors are to shepherd God's flock willingly, not because they must. They are to serve eagerly, not for personal gain. They are not to lord over the members of the flock, but are to serve as examples to them (1 Peter 5:2-3).

One of the major responsibilities of the pastor is to do everything possible to encourage all of the leaders and members of the church family to follow Jesus as Lord. Our pastors should encourage us and help us to live under the authority of Jesus Christ and under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Pastors serve Christ and his church in a number of strategic ways. The pastor feeds the flock by teaching God's Word; cares for the flock by providing pastoral nurture; protects the flock by providing instruction and assistance in being on guard, resisting and overcoming the enemy through prayer; disciples the flock by training the members in spiritual virtues and disciplines; equips the flock by helping members recognize their gifting and calling to service, and then deploys the flock into ministry in the church and in the world.

The pastor's ultimate purpose is to help us grow to maturity in Christ—attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

What a worthy goal. What a noble ministry!

Pastors are not perfect—they are growing in Christ. Please understand that I am not contending that all pastors are fulfilling the goal of helping a congregation grow toward spiritual maturity. Nor am I suggesting that all of the problems of a local church are caused by discontented church mem-

bers. That is not true. Unfortunately, some pastors are the cause of division or disruption in the ministry of a local church.

Although pastors have been called of God to serve as spiritual leaders, they are mere human beings—they are not spiritually perfect. Only Jesus Christ is perfect. He is our one and only perfect leader.

Our pastors are called of God to help us follow Jesus as the Lord of our lives. However, they sometimes fail. Some of them have blind spots. Others become angry or impatient. Some even seem to be inept. They are only human vessels.

However, they are very special people. They have been chosen by God to serve in very important and strategic places of leadership—in local churches. They need our help and encouragement just as we need theirs. When they fail or "fall short" in ministry, we have the privilege of ministering to them—of calling them back to following the Chief Shepherd and to focusing on the ministry purposes and goals which the Lord of the church has entrusted to them.

Pastors need care and encouragement

Pastors need us. They are not mere employees of the church who are to be hired or fired as employees may be in a business enterprise. Pastors are called by God to serve in specific churches at specific ministries which build the church of Jesus Christ and advance his kingdom.

Pastors need special care and encouragement from every member of the church family. As they give their lives to care for us, we need to respond lovingly by caring for them and their families. Let me suggest some specific ways we can enhance the spiritual ministry of our pastors:

1. *Pray for your pastor.* That was the frequent request of the apostle Paul to the Christians who belonged to the churches he had established. Paul asked for prayers many times in many different ways: "Pray for us" (1 Thessalonians 5:25). "Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored" (2 Thessalonians 3:1). "Join me in my struggle by praying to God for me" (Romans 15:30).

All of those are appropriate prayers for our pastors. We would do well to pray for God's wisdom, protection, provision, and power for our pastors. There is no greater gift we can share with them.

2. *Love your pastor.* Many pastors spend most of their time and energy reaching out with love to minister to others. Often they receive little in return.

It is marvelous to provide some regular tender loving care for your pastor and family. You can love your pastor in so many different ways. For example, you can write an appreciative note, express verbal thanks for ministry, invite the pastor's family for dinner, offer personal friendship, provide a special pastor's appreciation day once a year, share a special birthday or Christmas gift—all of these are special ways you can share your love in action (1 John 3:18).

3. *Minister to your pastor.* Pastors have not received every spiritual gift. God has provided gifts so that all of us will be dependent upon him and interdependent on one another. That includes pastors. You may have never thought of it, but as your pastor uses his spiritual gifts to minister to you and the other members of your church family, he needs you to minister to him. Ask the Lord to guide you in the ways you can best serve you pastor.

4. *Contribute to your pastor's joy.* The author of Hebrews gave us sober and beneficial instruction as he was moved by the Holy Spirit to write, "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden" (Hebrews 13:17).

What wise counsel!

That kind of ministry to our pastors will bring joy to them—and to

The Primary Joys of Pastoring

Preaching, teaching	38 %
Discipling people	33
Evangelism	28
Pastoral care	12
Worship	10
Motivating the laity to be involved in ministry	7
Prayer	4
Building and maintaining meaningful relationships	4

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us—and to the entire church family. More of us need to commit ourselves to follow our leaders whom the Lord has called and anointed to lead us. The only time we should not follow them is if we believe that they are leading us away from Christ and his way.

It is time to follow our pastors—and to contribute joy to our pastors' lives and ministries.

5. Communicate constructively with your pastor. When we have concerns about our pastors or about aspects of the ministries of the church, let us communicate with the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. So many church members write nasty, destructive, and condemning letters—and then some have the audacity to sign their letters "Love in Christ." How sad.

The Word of God is clear. If we think that we have seen a brother or sister caught in a sin, we should attempt to restore them gently. And we should be careful lest we also be tempted with that sin—or another. That should be our spirit as we communicate concerns with our pastors.

As we communicate with such love and humility, we will help fulfill the law of Christ as we help to carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2). Sometimes our pastors need us to help them carry their burdens.

6. Empower your pastor for more significant ministry. You can be used of God to help your pastor become more effective in ministry. By your prayers and love and care and service and constructive communication, you will strengthen your pastor, his ministry, and the ministry of your church.

Brothers and sisters, it is a great privilege for us to love our pastors, to pray for them, to encourage them and their families in every possible way, and to help them carry the load of ministry. As surely as our pastors will someday give an account to God for how they have cared for us, so we will be accountable for how we have cared for them. It's time for all of us to provide all the loving care we can for our pastors.

Let us pray together, "Lord begin with us!" ❑

Dr. Paul Cedar is president of The Evangelical Free Church of America. From the January 1994 Evangelical Beacon. *Used by permission.*

The Major Difficulties of Pastors

Lack of laity commitment	30%
Handling financial and administrative duties	13
How to do effective outreach	12
Implementing change	10
Counseling	9
Developing community within the congregation	8
The low level of spiritual maturity of people	8
Gaining greater leadership involvement by the laity	7
Church politics	4
Relational difficulties	4

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Editorial from page 3

and conflict and I'm convinced that they are the source of most church conflicts. Does your church have a written job description where those expectations are clearly described? Has your congregation designated a specific group to act as a pastoral relations committee? Those two actions can go a long way to helping pastors and congregations enjoy an effective, productive relationship.

Our pastors need our verbal and spiritual support. Someone once described football as 50,000 people in desperate need of exercise watching twenty-two players in desperate need of rest. That describes many congregations who fall into the unbiblical trap of expecting the pastor to do everything. The New Testament teaches that the ministry of the church is the job of every believer. Encourage your pastor not only with words of support, but with your willingness to be involved in the work of your congregation.

During the last twelve years, I've had the high privilege of meeting and getting to know many Advent Christian pastors. I'm impressed by their dedication to God's kingdom work and their concern for the spiritual welfare of the people they serve. Their ministry is the heartbeat of the Advent Christian Church and I'm thankful for them. And I pray that God will richly bless their work as they serve as Christ's undershepherds in Advent Christian congregations throughout Canada and the United States. ❑

The Angels of Santa Cruz

L. Harry Soucy
Mechanicsville, Va.

THE HEAT WAS not yet as noticeable as it would be later, when the sun rose higher in the tropical sky. At this early hour you couldn't yet see the curve of its crown peeking over the roofs of tin and thatch that dominated the view from our apartment window. Two stories below, in the narrow street, the Motorolas were already whining at a high pitch overloaded with their human cargo, each going somewhere to do something on this Sunday morning in this Filipino city of more than 600,000.

I stood at the window, amused, reflecting at how busy and hectic things were in the open market that stood guard at the end of our little lane. Sounds rose that spawned fresh images in my imagination. I could see people dickering and dealing for the best price for the bony chickens that lined the sidewalks. Thousands of pounds of rice, fish, fresh fruit, and vegetables would be sold before the sun made it halfway through its day. They would barter for brooms, sell sandals, and propose pigs as lechon for someone's lunch.

By car and by foot

My thoughts about the market were stopped by the sickly sound of the mission's Ford Fiera stopped outside the steel doors of our walled compound. Our driver had arrived to take us to Santa Cruz, a little mountain community seven kilometers or so above Claveria, on the island of Mindanao. Visitors rarely make it to this remote village, and the Christians there were looking forward to our sharing at the Lord's table. They hadn't experienced that celebration for three months.

Santa Cruz was both difficult to

get to, and potentially dangerous to be in, once you arrived. This southern island of the Philippines has suffered from political unrest between democratic and communist philosophies. The communist-supported New People's Army (NPA) has a bootcamp close to this little hamlet and will still occasionally engage in combat with the Philippine army and with other visitors to the area.

I signaled to my wife that our ride had arrived. Gathering our things we headed out the door and down the stairs, all the way asking God for protection until we returned to our tiny place of safety. At the truck, we were introduced to Steve, a representative of an international and interdenominational mission effort, who was tagging along to research an abandoned location where his mission's boot camp had been established in 1981. This was before the communists burned them out in the mid-1980s.

The two-hour ride through the city streets of Cagayan de Oro and then over the steep winding road through the mountains that led to Claveria was uneventful and enjoyable. By this time the sun was shining brightly, and traveling higher and higher, affording us a breathtaking view of the tops of the tropical rain forests that led down to the deep blue of the sea still visible on the horizon.

It was not until navigating our way through the clogged streets of Claveria that the heater hose blew. White puffs of steam curled up through the gaping spaces surrounding the rusted hood of the Fiera, alerting us that our trip was changing its mood, and ours. There were no spare auto parts to be had anywhere in this mountain village on a Sunday morning. Our driver hitched a jeepney ride back to Cagayan where he thought one might be available. Etta would stay with the wounded veteran, and Steve and I would travel by foot the seven kilometers left to Santa Cruz.

Rocky, the Philippine Conference youth pastor, was in Claveria that morning and agreed to be our guide to Santa Cruz. He led us down a narrow footpath that forced us to move in single file as the jungle pressed in around us. I wondered how long it would be before I slipped and fell on the slick mud underneath my feet. I tried to place my feet in the steps created by the hoof-prints of the carabao that regularly traversed this path.

The heat of the tropical sun made the trip laborious. I had to frequently wipe my brow with a borrowed handkerchief, and I could feel the sweat run down my back soaking through my shirt. Several times we crossed paths with some mountain folk headed into town on horseback. We gave them a nod, and they returned it with careful inspection, spinning around for an even longer look after their horses had passed us by.

I felt alone, and being in this forest made me uneasy. I am glad that I did not learn until later that while we were walking in, the Philippine army was carrying out two bodies of their own men gunned down in a duel by the New People's Army Thursday evening just past Santa Cruz. Even so, while in the shadow of the tall trees of that rain forest, I prayed that the Lord would keep Etta and me in the shadow of his wings.

Time to celebrate

We eventually emerged on the uneven dirt road that would lead us into Santa Cruz. Two more hours passed before we finally walked into the collection of nipa huts inhabited by mostly friendly Filipinos. Between the boundaries of that town and the church building, our hike became a parade of barking dogs and busy chil-

dren. Everywhere were chickens, goats, pigs, and cows who roamed with complete freedom.

When we finally arrived at the church building they greeted us with warm hugs, flowers, and a hearty breakfast. Through Rocky's translation we heard of their growing concern for us because we were so late. The great group of believers were gathered and waiting for more than three hours, and had filled the simple structure they used for a church building. They'd spent some of that time praying for us, asking the Lord to protect us, wherever we were, by sending his angels to surround us and provide whatever it was that we needed.

We visited for a time with the pastor and his wife. Their home was in the lower level of the church building. Each child who attended worship that day took their turn in coming close to the door to the room we were in. They peered in with wonder, with quizzical looks on their tiny faces. One could only wonder what was going through their little minds. Even while the children entertained us, I worried about how Etta might be doing with our disabled Fiera in Claveria. I asked the pastor, a retired Filipino military man, to pray with me for the Lord to keep his angels with her where she was. After praying together, it was time to begin.

Worship followed the usual pattern with 45 or 50 minutes of choruses. Although most of the nationals in this church did not speak English or understand it, they had memorized short worship songs they heard on tapes sent in from the West. Something stirred in my heart when I witnessed these rural people of such deep poverty and need enjoy their clapping, singing, and dancing in the Lord so much. When it came time for the tithe, they sang and danced even more! Some would travel the middle aisle to the altar and bring cash, but even more would bring the produce from their daily labors and place their offering in a box marked the "Titus Box." Even those who had nothing to give could rejoice with those who had.

The events that followed the sermon were remarkable. During our service of Communion, after the prayer over the broken pieces of cracker, I casually announced my habit of inviting anyone among those in the congregation who had a prayer request to say so and we would pray for them. Rocky translated my words. One woman stood, and in her arms was a small four-pound baby with a noticeably enlarged head. Rocky told me of the many tears this mother had shed on many nights since the birth of this little one. There was no doctor in this village, and if there were, there would be no money for treatment. "Bring the baby forward," I said, "and we will pray." The woman's face beamed with faith. I invited Rocky, Steve, and the pastor to join me and lay hands on the baby's head to pray for the angels of the Lord to protect this little one. Appealing to this mother's faith, we asked God to heal this broken little body.

In the space of less than an hour I had seen the hand of God in the face of another, and witnessed the senseless destruction at the hand of the enemy. These mountain Christians live with these extremes daily.

When we lifted our eyes, it was to see more coming. One came for a broken leg, another for lung cancer. One claimed an evil spirit, and still another could only cry. They kept coming and we prayed for each individually, always knowing that it was their own faith, not ours making the difference in our prayers. I had never seen such simple and trusting faith that took God at his Word.

We had been in God's presence

They had been there since 8:30 that morning and it was now almost 2:30 in the afternoon. When Rocky, Steve, and I left that little church we knew that we had been in the presence of the power of God and his angels. It was the confident faith of those believers that God had listened to, and we had witnessed at least some answers.

After the benediction, Steve and I stepped outside the front doorway of the church where a path rose toward a small plateau hidden by banana plants and coconut palms. We climbed until we spied the spot that he had come so far to assess. At the entrance to what was once a cement block building lay a flat stone upon which was chiseled the words, "Built to the glory of God, 1981." Rocky explained how the communists had since infiltrated the area and destroyed the Christian boot camp. Charred roof timbers were all that remained. They seemed a silent sentinel still standing, a reminder of those who had suffered there at the hands of the rebels. In the afternoon quietness you could feel and hear the gentle breeze blowing through those timbers. I asked Rocky if the New People's Army was still here, and after a soft pause came the simple, "Yes."

We found our way down the mountain path back to the main road, each lost deep in our own thoughts. I cannot remember experiencing mixed emotions of such powerful extremes. In the space of less than an hour I had seen the hand of God in the face of another, and witnessed the senseless destruction at the hand of the enemy. These mountain Christians live with these extremes daily. My respect for their faith grew even more.

We walked along without speaking. The somber silence reigned for only minutes, as soon we heard the unmistakable rattle of our mission's Fiera, and we shortly saw her round

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Missions Moments

LIBERIA

Fragmented but not forgotten

Harold Patterson
Director of World Missions

LIBERIA IS our newest, and in many ways, our least known, Advent Christian mission field. In the spring of 1989, Rev. Frank Jewett and World Mission director Harold Patterson visited Liberia after a field visit to Nigeria. The reason for the Liberia visit was a letter received almost a year earlier, from a group in Liberia professing to be an independent conditionalist church seeking ties with a denomination in the United States of similar belief. It is our policy not to accept a group into our mission merely upon their letter of application and interest. We require a field visit to that country to assess the group, and determine whether or not we share the same scriptural convictions.

We found the Liberian Christians to be some of the most dedicated people that we had met anywhere.

When Frank and I visited Liberia, we were impressed by the Independent Christian Church of Liberia. The church had been started many years earlier by Rev. Ben Cleon, an itinerant traveling evangelist, self-educated in the Scriptures, but gifted in the ministry of evangelism. Through some forty years of ministry, Ben had established a dozen churches throughout Liberia and a Christian day school in Monrovia, the capital. As he neared retirement, he realized that if his work was to continue, it was necessary to have outside support and backing. So he sought a relationship with a like-minded church in the United States, hence his contact with us. In checking on his reliability with independent mission groups in Liberia, I found that this man received the highest recommendations from North American missionaries. He was indeed a valuable Christian worker. Frank and I were able to visit the congregation in Monrovia and in Buchanan, the second largest city in Liberia. A number of their churches existed in the interior, where few outsiders ever go.

When the church joined us, there were ten churches with about 2000 members. Soon after, about four years ago, civil war broke out in Liberia between three rival factions. The government was overthrown after a bloody battle in Monrovia. The war continued with fighting throughout the country. As a result, much damage was done and many Christians of all faiths were slaughtered. Many western missionary institutions were decimated. The leadership of our church in Liberia went deeper into the interior. At least one pastor was killed, many church members martyred, and most of our church buildings in populated areas destroyed. I have recently heard that the Christian school that the church operated in Monrovia was still open. That's all I know at the moment.

Mr. Amos Gbaa and one of Ben Cleon's sons, Ben Cleon Jr., led a group of refugees across the border into the Ivory Coast where they have been living and attempting to build a church. They are also witnessing to other refugees in that area. In essence we now have mission work in the Ivory Coast, although it is only among Liberian refugees who may well return once peace returns in Liberia. There has been a truce signed in Liberia, although renewed civil war could still break out. Whether the country will ever get back together is a serious question that requires much prayer. Meanwhile, we are providing minimal support and relief funds for food and shelter.

When I initially visited Liberia, even though our trip was delayed for

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The FALL and RISING of ISRAEL

Les Lawrence
Clearwater, Fla.

THROUGHOUT history nations have formed, rose to their highest levels of glory on the world scene, and then declined to a level of unimportance or disappeared altogether. Yet there is a fascinating prophecy given over the baby Jesus that amazingly contradicts the normal pattern, as it relates to Israel.

"Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is destined for the *fall and rising* of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against'" (Luke 2:34). This verse has been overlooked by many scholars, but it hides a profound hint of revelation. Virtually every nation in the history of planet Earth follows the simple pattern of "rise and fall" except Israel! Most nations rise and fall, but Israel, which was falling in the time of Jesus, was destined to rise again. Even more to the point is the fact that Jesus himself was destined to preside over both the *fall* of Israel in his first advent and then at its *rise* in his second coming! He was here to preside over the *fall* of Israel in the first century A.D. and he will return to preside over the resurrection of Israel at the end of time. "For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15).

The fall of Israel

Jesus accurately predicted the fall of Israel: *But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ...And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled* (Luke 21:20, 24).

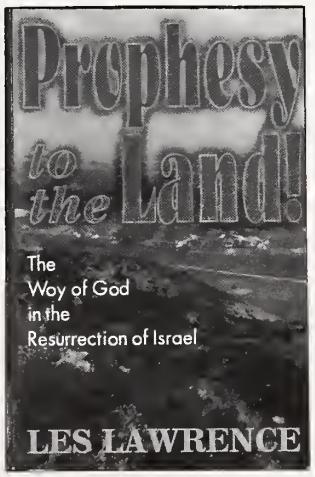
The fall of Jerusalem was historically fulfilled in A.D. 70 as the Romans conquered Israel and began a long succession of Gentile rule in the Holy City. That rule finally ended in 1967 when Israel recaptured Jerusalem during the six-day war.

Some of the greatest lessons of history are recorded in volumes of books about the rise and fall of empires. The Third Reich demonstrated how fast a nation can rise and fall. Nazi Germany nearly conquered the world through its *blitzkrieg* lightning attacks and victories in Europe and North Africa. They might have succeeded had it not been for the encourage of the Allies and the purposes of God. Again, at the beginning of the 1990s, we observed what at close range had to be one of the most incredible turn of events in contemporary history. The great "evil empire" (so-called by former President Ronald Reagan) began to unravel and dissolve right

before our eyes. Who would have expected that communism, which had appeared on the world stage a scant 70 years earlier, would fall so quickly? The militant Marxism, which had intimidated a world with its godless rule based on military might, was suddenly impotent. The multi-headed hydra monster headquartered in Moscow with tentacles reaching around the world was mortally wounded. Afghanistan became their Vietnam—draining resources, manpower, and finances in a war that in the end seemed pointless. This powerful ideology failed because of one simple fact: It did not work!

Original sin

Bible students could have predicted communism's failure based on original sin. Since Adam's sin and fall from grace in the garden of Eden, every man and woman has been born with a natural tendency toward sin. Selfishness is the most obvious attribute of sin, just as selflessness is an attribute of righteousness. Everyone naturally takes care of "number one." Those who try to refute this fact need only to look into a baby's crib where two babies are placed with only one rattle. What ensues could possibly be compared with World War 3 on a baby scale. Selfishness is automatic, whereas laying down one's self will is a learned trait, and a hard-earned one at that. Thus, communism was destined to fail because it was based on a philosophy that presumed the good will of men—that they would all work hard and productively for the common good. However, the human nature was proven once again: lust for money, power, domination, and violence was compounded by laziness, envy, and rebellion. In short, humanity is sinful.



Communal sharing is an ideal that is clearly unreachable for unregenerate men and women. In fact, if we are honest, even born-again and Spirit-filled Christians have difficulty dealing with the "old nature." "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:52-53). In other words, we are still corruptible until Jesus returns. We would prefer that God wave a magic wand and make us perfect, but he prefers that we go through a process similar to that of his Son Jesus: "Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). We are learning to follow the Lord his way.

The fall of democracy

Before we Americans start getting any egotistical ideas, we also need to consider democracy. The history of the durability of democracies is not much better. Ron Blue reminds us that,

"More than 200 years ago, while the original 13 colonies were still part of Great Britain, Professor Alexander Tyler wrote of the Athenian republic, which had fallen 2000 years earlier: 'A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves a largesse from the [public] treasury. From that moment on, the majority will always vote for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy and is always followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through this sequence: From bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from great courage to abundance; from abundance to selfishness; from selfishness to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependency; from dependency back again into bondage.'" (Ron Blue, *Master Your Money*, 1985).

What stage of transition do you think the United States is in now? Perhaps the World Wars showed our great courage. Were the 1950s our abundance, followed by the selfish 1960s? Have the 1970s and 1980s been the transition from complacency to apathy? Are things moving that fast? Maybe not, but if this amazing definition of the downfall of democracy fits our situation then the stage of dependency is next for the 1990s. That scenario is not as unthinkable as it once was; the nation that fed the world could be bankrupt and in bondage before the year 2000!

The United States now measures its national debt at more than four *trillion* dollars. Estimates suggest that the debt of the private business community equals that amount. The third area of debt is more telling than the first two: personal consumer debt is also said to be three trillion dollars! All of this debt points to an extremely vulnerable economy in this country. If the two superpowers of the modern world are on the brink of economic ruin, what or who will fill the vacuum created by such a devastating collapse? The answer could be Islam, a unified European Economic Community, New Age humanism, or any combination of these powers or other unforeseen developments. The one thing we do know is the Bible predicts that Israel and the Middle East will be right in the thick of things.

Democratic peace

Some would like to believe that democracy will win the world and the nations will dwell in peace. In the 1989 student demonstration in China, a model of the Statue of Liberty was raised in Tiananmen Square. They called it "the goddess of liberty." You can be sure that the God of the Bible will have no other gods before him, including this goddess! No, democracy will not save the human race. American democracy has worked partially because the founding fathers believed the Bible and structured our government with the presupposition of original sin. They devised a system of checks and balances with three branches of government that has made it much more difficult for a despot to gain control. However, in the time of an economic collapse, people could be so desperate that they would welcome a powerful leader who would promise prosperity in return for total authority. This scenario was demonstrated in Russia where Boris Yeltsin, in December 1993, asked for and received a vote of confidence for his presidency and for increased powers for his office. Will this scenario happen in America? Or is it just a nightmare? I hope so. Will it ever happen? I hope not, but even if it does, my faith is not in any human government, but in the God of heaven who has everything under control.

We do not know all that will unfold in the months and years ahead, but I strongly believe that Israel is a key player in whatever is to come. *"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness [literally, "reeling"] to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all the nations of the earth are gathered against it"* (Zechariah 12:2-3).

Again, these verses must refer to a future time because of the phrase "all the nations of the earth." Here also is the promise of their salvation in verse 10: "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on me whom they have pierced. Yes, they will mourn for him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for him as one grieves for a firstborn." This mention of "me whom they have pierced" dates this prophecy to some future time not only after the time of Zechariah but sometime after the death of Jesus.

The prophecy continues: *"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It shall be in that day," says the Lord of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land"* (Zechariah 13:1-2).

What a glorious time of repentance and forgiveness waits for God's covenant nation! There is no doubt that Israel fell, but there is equally no doubt in the Scriptures of her restoration and salvation in the end. We have seen the historical overview of Israel, but to find out how we get from history to fulfillment, we should look at what is happening today. God is faithful! ❑

Les Lawrence is senior pastor at Maranatha Chapel (A.C.) in Clearwater, Fla. This article is excerpted from his new book, Prophecy to the Land: The Way of God in the Resurrection of Israel. *(Destiny Image Publishers, 1994).* Prophesy to the Land *is available for $9.00 plus postage from Venture Bookstore. (800)676-0694.* *Copyright © 1994 by Les Lawrence. Used by permission.*

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The Golden Now With God

"Oh! Teach us to live well!
Teach us to live wisely and well!"
Psalm 90:12 (The Message)

Mary Jane Stone
Portland, Maine

SEPTEMBER is a wonderful month of beginnings. As a teacher for many years, my year started in September. The month represented new challenges and new beginnings. The "Golden Now" means a Christian's attitude of trust, appreciation, and contentment, expecting God to give us daily what we need. People with the Golden Now attitude expect the best from God.

This year life will surprise you. Some things may be unpleasant, some delightful. Some happenings will stretch you and cause you to depend more on God. The Christian life is never humdrum, but it is often a challenge. If the way is rocky and uphill, God will be with you at every turn. For example, as president of Big Lake Campmeeting for several years, staffing the youth camp was a yearly problem. I prayed and asked friends to pray for camp. I held God to his promise that says, "My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Every year, at the critical moment, God supplied what the camp needed. He was never late. After several of these yearly crises, I've learned to expect God to do the unexpected in his time.

The Golden Now is about trust and contentment. Do you trust God? Can you be joyful in spite of circumstances? When health or friendships fail, when a spouse or a child dies, we cling to God's promises harder than ever. Our faith grows stronger as each challenge teaches us to focus on Jesus, not on circumstances.

Appreciating the Golden Now is also a habit. The foundation of contentment may partly rest in a happy childhood, good health, friends, and fulfilling work. But it also includes routing the little foxes of irritation, worry, and resentment (Song of Solomon 2:15). Legitimate concern and planning are necessary, but worry is paying interest on a loan you have never received. Energy spent on anxiety or resentment saps strength for present demands. "I will not worry about what I cannot fix" is a statement of trust.

Now is only "golden" if there are no nagging regrets from the past. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness." Keep short accounts with God and others. Confess sin and try again. Trust God to do what he promises.

Happiness is a consciously chosen daily attitude. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a one day at a time teaching. The Israelites gathered manna daily (except on the Sabbath) (Exodus 16:14-16). One day's problems are enough for one day. Like the old clock said, "You just cope one tick at a time." "As your days are, so shall your strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

Praise is the key to joy. Praise, like a Mozart melody or a Vivaldi sonata, floods your soul with sunshine.

"Carpe diem." Seize the day! Living in the Golden Now means grabbing opportunities and using them. No procrastination should be allowed to spoil your concentration. "Now is always best time" says the king in "The King and I." Adventure into new hobbies, tasks, or work. New friends wait to be made. Different skills can be learned. Take the chance. Prove to yourself that you can do it with God's help.

God holds your life, both past and future. You are only responsible for the present. That is all you have or need. Use the Golden Now well this new year. ❑

Mary Jane Stone is a retired school teacher and is active at Christ Chapel (A.C.) in Raymond, Maine.

The Day GOD Used a Horsefly

Joy Gallagher
Presque Isle, Me.

IT WAS A warm, sunny July Sunday afternoon and my three daughters had convinced their father to take them to the Aroostook River instead of the pool to swim. My southern blood has not adjusted to the northern Maine water temperatures, but I decided to go along for the ride. I watched as the girls were carried down and tried to fight their way back up. They tried soaking their Dad and had a wonderful time. After awhile I noticed they all had their hands cupped beside their eyes and were looking in the water. "He must be showing them something underwater, " I thought, although I couldn't imagine what in *that* water. A few moments later my 6-year-old scampered up the bank and said, "Mommy, don't be mad at Daddy—he's lost his ring," and then she returned to the water. Ring? Ring?! His wedding ring! I wondered if I should help with the search or stay put. Deciding to wait, I began thinking about that ring—how I'd saved in college for it, the inscription, the years he'd worn it. When my family dragged up the hill later, there was no ring.

The ride home brought sentimental tears, but mentally I was already calculating when we could afford to replace it. I even looked in a catalog that afternoon for a similar band.

The story of the lost ring circulated in our church. We were hoping that someone might have found it along the riverbank. Early one morning, a week later, John told me he had to go back to the river to look for the ring; someone had specifically prayed he would find it. He didn't have to tell me who it was—I knew this prayer warrior and the evidence of her faith and God's answers surround her. To my shame I realized I hadn't prayed about it. I simply assumed it was gone. After I spent time praying I fully expected John to come back with the ring. Instead he returned with the story of a man walking across the bridge and hollering down, "Are you looking for gold?" John yelled back, "Kind of, a ring." That was followed by "You'll *never* find anything in *that* river." It was not an encouraging report. I wondered why God hadn't answered prayer, but shrugged it off thinking he must have a reason.

The next week we were away on vacation. Returning from a trip to town, I was met in the driveway with a, "You'll never believe who called!" John continued with the story of a phone call and someone asking, "Do you own a ring that says, "6-9-79. All my love, Joy?" The prayer warrior and her husband had prayed again and gone back not once, but *twice* to search for the ring. Her husband had found a plastic bag filled with rocks that he assumed we had placed there as a marker (we had not) and began his search. Nothing. He kept searching that area until a huge horsefly bit him. He said he jumped and kicked over a rock. When he looked back in the water under where the rock had been, there was the *ring*! I couldn't believe it...and yet I could. God had used a talking donkey. Why not a horsefly?

I was reminded of the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18. So often we ask God for something once and leave it. Yes, he has power to answer with just one prayer, but how much greater the joy when we have diligently "pestered" him in prayer and then see remarkable answers that only He can provide.

It is nice to see that gold band back on John's hand. It is now a constant reminder not only of our love, but of God's love for us and the lessons he taught us about faith and persistent prayer. ❑

A graduate of Berkshire Christian College, Joy Gallagher lives in Presque Isle, Me., where she and her husband John serve State Road Advent Christian Church. John and Joy have three children—Lindsey, Hillary, and Katie.

Sayoko Crabtree Serves in Japan

Austin Warriner
Seattle, Wash.

On Easter Sunday 1994 Sayoko Crabtree of the Melrose, Mass., Faith Evangelical Church (AC) completed nearly two years of volunteer service in Japan pastoring the Asukano Advent Christian Church. She learned of the need through one of Dorothy's prayer letters that told of our reluctance to leave the church without leadership during the year we would be in the Philippines.

Jesus laid this burden on Sayoko's heart and her husband Duane agreed that the right time had come for her to go back to her own nation and serve her own people this way. We rejoiced much when we got a phone call inquiring if she could help and everyone agreed it was the Lord's provision.

In the February issue of the Japan Advent Christian News the following excerpt from a junior high girl tells the positive ministry that Sayoko has had in Japan. The girl is Sachiko Nagata, the oldest child of Mrs. Kyoko Nagata, a leading member of the Asukano Church. "Although I began attending Sunday school while still in kindergarten and love going each Sunday and accepted with my mind that Jesus had died on the cross for my sins and was raised from the dead, I still could not say from my heart that I was sure that I would enter the kingdom of heaven if Jesus should suddenly come back. I was in junion high school when Pastor Sayoko began to have a one-on-one study with me. During this time of study, Jesus became real to me. I met him and believed in him with all my heart. Pastor Sayoko and I turned to the Holy Spirit in prayer. My heart was warmed and I felt the presence of Jesus and was truly able to believe in him. When the teacher spends time alone with one child, that child is the only person in view and the teaching is directed to that one person. And the child is not afraid to interrupt with a question when she doesn't understand something. That's why I was finally able to believe from

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

October

1 Pray for **Karen Rigney** as she begins language school and teaches English classes in Japan.

2 Pray that God will guide **Margaret Helms** as she provides leadership for the new Advent Christian congregation in Ono Newtown, Japan.

3 Praise God for the opportunities that **Steven and Ann Lay** will have to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions while at home on furlough.

4 Praise God for 35 years of faithful, fruitful missionary service by **Austin and Dorothy Warriner** as they retire from active mission service.

5 Pray that God will not only call **new missionaries** to serve with Advent Christian missions in the years to come, but that he will supply the financial resources necessary to send them.

6 Pray that the Lord will guide us to the right people to serve as directors at **Oro Bible College.**

7 Pray for **David Vignali** as he carries out a variety of responsibilities with Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

8 Praise God for the lives being touched for Jesus Christ through Advent Christian mission work in the **Philippines.**

9 Pray that God will give strength and courage to Advent Christian national missionaries as they confront the influence of Islam in **Malaysia.**

10 Praise God for young people who made **first-time decisions** to follow Jesus Christ at Advent Christian camps this past summer.

11 Pray that God will guide as Advent Christian missions seeks new career workers for the **India** field.

12 As **Barbara White, Beryl Joy Hollis,** and **Marion Damon** enter their last year of active mission service in India, pray that God will richly bless their training and evangelistic work.

13 Pray that the students studying in the **School of Evangelism** in India will sense God's presence with them as they prepare for pastoral and evangelistic ministries.

14 Praise God for the effective service that **Robert Cole** gave to the Advent Christian General Conference as

Director of Services and pray that God will richly bless him and his wife Joan as they begin their retirement.

15 Pray for **W. James Smith, Clinton Taber, Larry Withrow,** and **Marshall Tidwell** as they serve the Advent Christian Church as regional superintendents.

16 Pray that God will give strength and wisdom to the staff at the **denominational offices** in Charlotte as they seek to serve Advent Christian people and congregations.

17 Praise God that the revised edition of Edward Fudge's ***The Fire That Consumes*** has just been released by Paternoster Press, a British evangelical publisher.

18 Pray that Advent Christians in **Liberia** will be bold in proclaiming the good news of Christ's love to those living in that war-torn nation.

19 Pray for Pastor **Ben Cleon** and the other leaders of the Liberia Advent Christian Conference.

20 Praise God for the opportunity that **Frank Jewett, Russell Giasson,** and **Aloysius Okun** had to train Nigerian Advent Christians on their recent short-term mission trip.

21 Pray that pastors and congregations connected with the Advent Christian Church in **Nigeria** will be effective in evangelism and church planting.

22 Today marks the 150th anniversary of what Adventists call the "Great Disappointment." Pray that God will give us **patience** as we await the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

23 Continue to pray that the Lord will reveal his choice for national missionaries to serve with Advent Christian missions in **Mexico.**

24 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to students and faculty at **Tecate Bible Institute** as they begin a new school year.

25 Pray that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** will be led by God as they continue their pastoral work with the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

26 Praise God for the continuing work of **Mexican Medical Mission** as they minister to the physical and spiritual needs of Mexican nationals.

27 Pray that God will guide the mission as they prepare to open a new field in the Central American nation of **Honduras.**

28 Pray for World Mission Director **Harold Patterson** as he seeks to wisely manage the financial and personnel resources of Advent Christian missions.

29 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they serve the Advent Christian congregation located in the inner-city of Memphis, Tennessee.

30 Today is **NAE Sunday**. Pray for the National Association of Evangelicals as they work to build a strong Christian influence in the United States.

31 Pray that God will give **your pastor** strength for the many tasks of ministry needing to be performed during this coming week.

Liberia continued from page 11

about a year, the church there took offerings every month so that they could provide for us when we came and not be a cost to our mission while we were there. This meant great sacrificial giving on the part of the people. We found the Liberian Christians to be some of the most dedicated people that we had met anywhere. They were knowledgeable in the Scriptures and anxious to serve.

Liberia was founded by freed slaves from the United States, but those who went back to Liberia took over the area and were antagonistic toward the people who already lived there. While Liberia may profess to be a Christian country, its dominant religion is spiritism. This is where the devil worship of Haiti originated. There is a great deal of voodoo and spirit worship in Liberia. The gospel confronts this in full force. Liberia is truly a legitimate and needy mission field. Pray the door will once again open so that life and freedom in Christ might be proclaimed. ❑

Santa Cruz continued from page 10

the corner, escorted with a cloud of late afternoon dust! That old heap never looked so good! I climbed into the front seat with Etta while Steve and Rocky occupied the enclosed space behind the cab.

During the decline the Ford behaved herself, following the curves in the road like an Olympic slalom contestant, racing downhill toward the setting sun leaving the secluded villages behind. As the mountain air exchanged places with the sea breeze, I privately thanked God for the angels he camped around Santa Cruz. For those who had been there when we arrived, and for those who remained when we left. ❑

Harry and Etta Soucy completed a six-month short-term assignment with Advent Christian Missions in the Philippines earlier this year. Harry now serves as senior pastor at the Mechanicsville, Va., Advent Christian Church.

Crabtree continued from page 17

my heart, be baptized, and become a true member of the Asukano Church. How thankful I am for Pastor Sayoko and her ministry at my church."

And how thankful we are that Sayoko Crabtree and her husband Duane listened to the voice of Jesus and obeyed his command. Sayoko's selfless ministry will be multiplied in the years ahead by those whose lives have been touched and built up in the faith. ❑

Sayoko Crabtree returned home to the metro-Boston area last spring. She and her husband Duane are active at Faith Evangelical Church (A.C.) in Melrose.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

When we think of the church we must conjure up a picture not of people like ourselves, but of people of all colors and shapes and ages, women and men speaking different tongues, following different customs, practicing different habits, but all worshipping the same Lord. Having such a concept is important because that is the church. It is important because that is the church that Jesus sees. And it's important because that is the church that Christ has called to represent his kingdom on earth. We do ourselves and Jesus a great disservice when we think otherwise.

—*S.D. Gaede in* When Tolerance is No Virtue

In Other Words...

The Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation puts out these lovely television ads on the theme "Life: What a Beautiful Choice." You've probably seen them. Planned Parenthood doesn't like them at all. One ad shows a wriggling newborn next to an ultrasound video of a ten-week old unborn baby moving in similar fashion. The ad says, "The only difference is that the baby on the left is already born, and the baby on the right would very much like to be." Alex Sanger of Planned Parenthood, the grandson of Margaret Sanger, complains, "This ad only gives half the story. The baby on the left is big. The fetus on the right is only a few inches long. There's no comparison. It's deceptive." Now let's see if we got this. Big. Little. Apparently that's all you need to know to master Planned Parenthood Ethics 101.

—*Richard John Neuhaus in the August/September 1994 issue of* First Things

Redemption is not just a matter of divine accounting: God does more than keep books on who is in and who is out. He weeps over the lost and celebrates whenever one is saved.

—*John MacArthur*

Television does not ban books, it simply displaces them.

—*Neil Postman*

I always talked about the reality of sin. But I'm not sure many people heard that in the media. I am a positive thinker. But I am also a realist. I know there is evil in this world. People can hurt each other and they can hurt themselves. We may not always be able to conquer evil. We may not be able to solve all our problems. Some we may have to learn to live with. But I am positive that there are many, many problems that, with God's help, we can solve.

—*Norman Vincent Peale quoted by Terry Mattingly in* Current Thoughts and Trends *(May 1994)*

***If* Christianity** is true, *if* Jesus is real, and *if* he did sacrifice Himself for our sins, then what would you expect church services to be like? You wouldn't expect them to be stilted, stale, and stiff; you would expect them to be sincere, stimulating, and spirited! If Christ is alive, his church shouldn't be dead.

—*Lee Strobel*

This is a free country. Within very broad limits, people may live as they wish. And yet, we believe that some ways of living are better than others. Better because they bring more meaning to our lives, to the lives of others, and to our fragile fallible human condition. Marriage and parenthood should be held up because between husband and wife and in fatherhood and motherhood come blessings that cannot be won in any other way.

—*William Bennett*

The notion that politics can function in a religious and theological vacuum is a myth. Politics is concerned with justice; justice is inescapably a moral concept; morality in turn is inescapably religious; and true religion, in the Christian perspective, inescapably includes particular theological commitments. Christianity entails the invariably political announcement that Jesus Christ, not Caesar, is Lord; to concede that political actors may legitimately ignore this highly specific theological claim is nothing less than abandonment of the Christian position.

—*Peter Leithart in* First Things *(May, 1994)*

While efficiency and control are the great aspirations of our society, the loneliness, isolation, lack of friendship and intimacy, broken relationships, boredom, feelings of emptiness and depression, and a deep sense of uselessness fill the hearts of millions of people in our success-oriented world.

—*Henri Nouwen*

We must clearly understand that the lust for affluence in contemporary society is psychotic. It is psychotic because it has completely lost touch with reality. We crave things that we neither need or enjoy.

—*Richard Foster*

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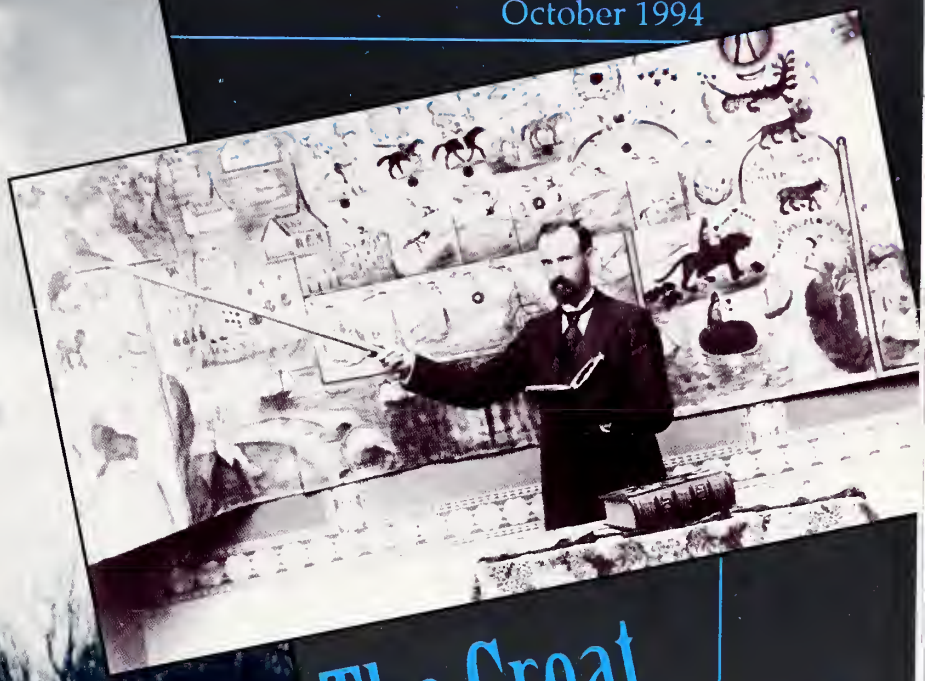
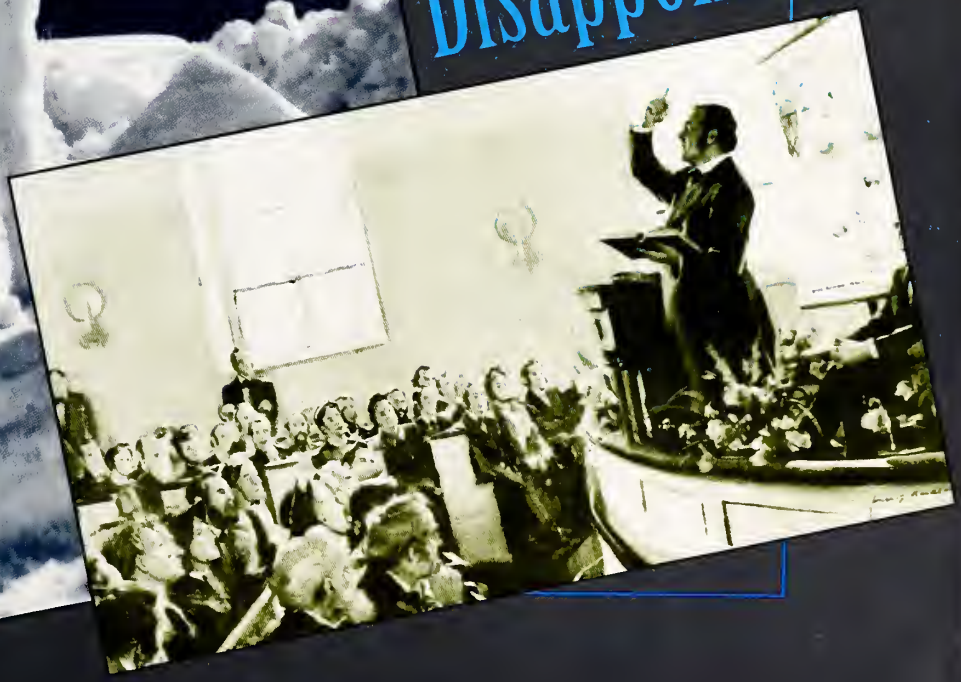


The Great Disappointment



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An artist's conception of William Miller speaking on biblical prophecy in 1843.
—*Publications office archives*

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

William Miller: Starting a Movement

IT'S HARD TO grasp the despair our Adventist forebears felt 150 years ago this month. Their voices became silent. Their presses stopped. Their meetings ceased. And they endured the taunts and derision of those both in church and society who thought their message was pure folly.

Many gave up and left the movement. But many stayed. They realized that while they had made a tragic mistake in setting a specific date for the return of Jesus Christ, something our Lord explicitly warns us against doing, their essential message of the soon return of Jesus Christ was profoundly biblical and needed to be proclaimed. William Miller, the founder of Adventism, would die within five years of what came to be termed the Great Disappointment. But Adventism did not. Miller's successors would organize hundreds of congregations and several denominational organizations, including the Advent Christian Church.

They didn't give up

Anniversaries are times to reflect on the meaning and importance of past events. Last spring, we remembered the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day. As one who was not yet born during World War 2, I'm grateful to the men who fought and died on Omaha, Utah, and Gold beaches that early June morning in 1944. They didn't give up in the face of terrible circumstances. Their sacrifice made it possible for me to live in a country not dominated by Nazi hatred or Communist tyranny.

But I'm also grateful for our Adventist forebears. In the face of despair, many of them didn't give up. Instead, they learned from their mistakes. They weren't formal theologians but people who retained their passion for Jesus Christ and proclaiming the message of his soon return. Their faithfulness in the face of tough circumstances is one of the reasons I'm a Christian today. And as we mark the 150th anniversary of the Great Disappointment this month, it's time that we're reminded of the important contribution William Miller and the early Adventists made to Christianity in Canada and the United States.

Jesus is coming soon

Miller's Adventual message was spoken to a people filled with an optimistic sense that they could build a great society in the United States. Miller preached to a church that for the most part accepted the postmillennial prophetic belief that by creating a Christian society, the church would usher in the Millennium, the 1,000-year period of time spoken of in Revelation 20, and then Jesus Christ would return to earth. It wasn't that Christians in Miller's time didn't believe in Christ's second coming. They did. But they believed Christ's return wouldn't happen until after the church had done its job of building the Christian society.

William Miller's significance lies in the fact that he challenged this dominant postmillennial belief by proclaiming the soon return of Jesus Christ. He was the first premillennialist to gain a significant following within the American church. The return of Jesus Christ was not dependent on the church building a Christian society. His return would occur according to God's timing and all indications from the Scriptures indicated to Miller that Jesus would return sooner rather than later.

While people laughed at and mocked Miller and his followers, within fifty years many American evangelicals had rejected postmillennialism in favor of a premillennialism that emphasized the soon return of Jesus Christ. Yes, they had a different understanding of how biblical prophecy spoke of Christ's return. Most premillennialists of the late 19th century accepted the dispensational futurism propagated by John Nelson Darby and C. I. Scofield as opposed to the historicist premillennialism of William Miller and the early

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What Can We Learn from The Great Disappointment?

David A. Dean
S. Hamilton, Mass.

AMERICA REMEMBERS the Millerite movement for its mistaken expectation that Jesus would return to earth on October 22, 1844. The failure of that date produced a deep disappointment among those early Adventists, a blow from which they never fully recovered. The majority retained their expectation that the Lord's return was near; but others rethought their views and a few even turned away from their Christian commitment.

In the summer of 1860, sixteen years after the Great Disappointment, some of those early Adventists organized the Christian Association, which has since become the Advent Christian Church. So it's especially appropriate that today's Advent Christians should look at the lessons we can learn from events surrounding October 22, 1844. Let me suggest a few of them.

Lesson one: Be careful

The Great Disappointment teaches us never to set dates for Christ's return. William Miller first preached that Jesus would return "on or about 1843." Pressed to be more precise as the time drew nearer, he narrowed it to "sometime during the Jewish year 1843" (March 21, 1843 to March 21, 1844). Not until October 6, 1844, did he endorse a more specific time, writing, "Christ will come in the seventh month (of the Jewish year, i.e. October), and will bless us all. Oh! glorious hope. Then I shall see him, and be like him, and be with him forever."

After the disappointment some urged Miller to offer another date; but he refused. He had previously compared Bible prophecy with human history. Recognizing that, despite his careful historical research, some of his dates had been incorrect, he explained, "If the defect is in human chronology, then no human knowledge is sufficient in this age to rectify it with any degree of certainty; and I see no good that can be accomplished by taking a stand for any future period, with less evidence than we had for 1843-1844."

Almost every year, some contemporary evangelical preacher promotes

a date for Christ's return to earth. Does not the Great Disappointment warn us eloquently against setting dates? Certainly we can, and we ought to, proclaim the nearness of our Lord's return. However, we should not discredit that biblically certain truth with a humanly uncertain date that is almost bound to fail. We can avoid more disappointments by heeding Jesus' warning, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:36, NASB).

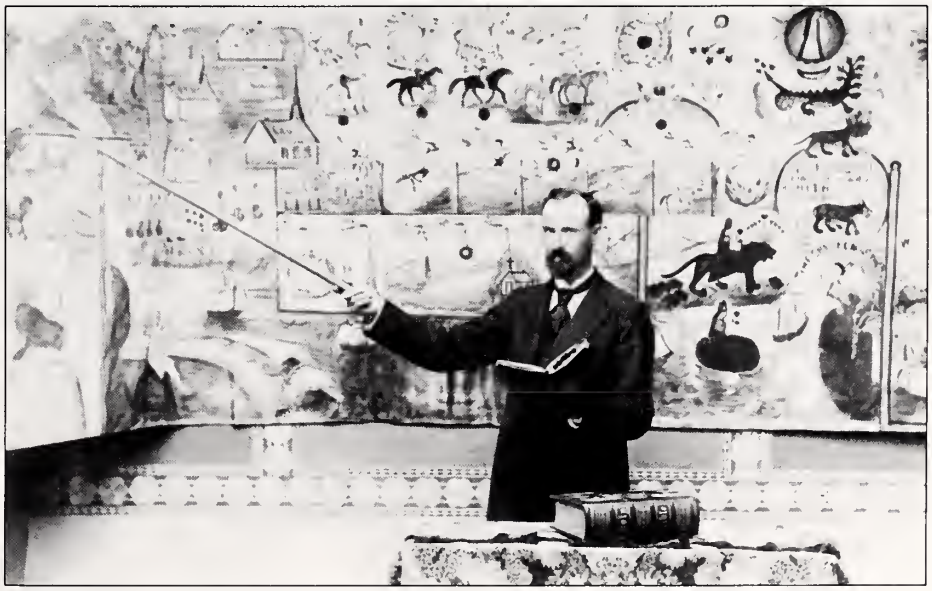
Lesson two: Be helpful

The Great Disappointment demonstrates that we can overcome discouragement faster by helping others who are in need. When Christ didn't return in 1844 as expected, many Millerites fell into self-pity. Overwhelmed by disappointment, shame, and discouragement, they avoided the public and each other. Adventist papers temporarily ceased publication and even the large Boston Adventist Tabernacle suspended meetings.

With most faithful believers immobilized in this near despair, Joshua V. Himes called them to a ministry of mercy towards their brethren who were in need. He reminded them that many of their fellow Adventists had "disposed of their substance and given alms. . . in the confident expectation of the speedy coming of the Lord," and urged that "immediate provision [be] made for the comfort and wants of all such persons and families by the Advent brethren." Instead of feeling sorry for themselves, he urged them to help one another. Instead of worrying about others scoffing over a failed date, he urged them to avoid further disgrace by caring for their own.

Miller was in full agreement, saying, "Our duty now is to comfort one another with the words of Christ's coming, to strengthen those who are weak among us, to establish the wavering, and to raise up the bowed down, speaking often to one another, and forsaking not the assembling of ourselves together." When we are dejected, we need to be with one another to encourage and otherwise help.

When we are "down," all of us tend to isolate ourselves and to focus on our own problems. We need to understand what those disappointed Adventist leaders knew—one reliable way to escape discouragement is to forget yourself and be helpful to others. Discouragement flourishes among those who yield to self-pity, but it starves among those busy at mutual aid. What an important lesson for us to learn whenever we get depressed! We can overcome our own predicaments fastest when we come together and respond helpfully to the needs of others.



Lesson three: Be trustful

The Great Disappointment reminds us that God is still alive, and does not abandon his people. With the Advent Movement collapsing around him, William Miller must have had greater reason for despair than any of his followers. Yet he could report, "Although I have been twice disappointed, I am not yet cast down nor discouraged. God has been with me in spirit, and has comforted me. . . my mind is perfectly calm, and my hope in the coming of Christ is as strong as ever. . . My soul is stayed on God, and I enjoy peace like a river." Miller was viewing life through the eyes of his heart. He was trusting God, rather than circumstances.

We too must learn to live by faith, not by sight. And this requires us to look beyond discouraging situations until we realize that God is still with us, no matter how bad things may appear. Like Moses, when threatened by a stubborn and violent Pharaoh, we can persevere as long as we "see him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). After all, our God is one who promises, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5). Faith

THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

No words can express the feelings

WHAT HISTORIANS call "the Great Disappointment" happened one hundred and fifty years ago this month.

On Tuesday, October 22, 1844, more than 100,000 Americans really believed-and probably a million more feared the possibility-that Christ would come back to earth before that very day was over. Excitement had been building since mid-summer. A thousand Adventist lecturers had fanned out over the northeastern United States. Nearly thirty Adventist newspapers had announced the Lord's coming, the presses rolling around the clock in Boston and New York City as *the day* approached. Sincere believers gave away literature and urged everyone they met to get ready for the Lord's coming.

The nearness of Christ's personal return was then a novel teaching for North Americans. First preached in 1831 by William Miller, an upstate New York Baptist farmer, the message of Christ's coming "on or about 1843" didn't really build momentum until after 1839 when Boston's Joshua V. Himes joined Miller. Himes was a public-relations genius who promoted the cause energetically through evangelistic crusades in major cities, rural summer campmeetings, and regional prophetic conferences. He recruited workers, supplied them with prophetic charts, and blanketed America with religious newspapers, books, and pamphlets. His followers established local reading rooms and promoted enthusiasm through Second Advent societies in many places. The Adventist Movement spread broadly even though an unsympathetic public derisively labeled it "Millerism."

In August 1844, a Millerite lecturer Samuel S. Snow began to preach that Jesus would return on the Jewish Day of Atonement October 22. The date caught the imagination of most Adventists, throwing them into a frenzy of preparation. Finally, even William Miller (who had never set a precise date for Christ's return) "saw a glory" in it and endorsed the time. As Adventist hopes found their focus in that one special day, believers poured their resources and efforts into issuing the final call for repentance and faith. And on October 22 these exhausted heralds waited.

But Christ did not come back that day, and deep disappointment overwhelmed those who believed he would. One confessed, "Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have no comparison. We wept and wept until the day dawned." And another, Luther Boutelle (a Millerite lecturer who later became an Advent Christian), remembered:

> The 22nd of October passed, making unspeakably sad the faithful and longing ones; but causing the unbelieving and wicked to rejoice. All was still. No *Advent Herald;* no meetings as formerly. Everyone felt lonely, with hardly a desire to speak to anyone. Still in the cold world! No deliverance—the Lord did not come! No words can express the feelings of disappointment of a true Adventist then. Those only who experienced it can enter into the subject as it was. It was a humiliating thing, and we all felt it alike.

Within a few weeks, many of the Millerites did overcome their despondence and worked again in further evangelistic and prophetic efforts. But their public credibility had been irreparably harmed. Millerism's days of fame and glory were slipping into the past. Even though Miller and the other leaders set no further dates, the damage had already been done. Their general Advent message would eventually be accepted throughout America by all evangelical groups, but most people will always remember the Millerites for their mistaken date and their great disappointment.

—*David A. Dean*

overcomes discouragement by recognizing that the eternal God is still here.

Lesson four: Be humble

The Great Disappointment confirms that God's Word remains true, even when we have misunderstood its proper meaning. October 23, 1844, confirmed that Adventist calculations had gone wrong. But Miller couldn't figure out where, explaining, "I have had time, a few weeks past, to review the whole subject, and. . . I cannot see why we were not right." But of one thing he was absolutely certain: the fault was not with God's Word. "You can, all of you. . . open your Bibles and with meekness and fear show the inquirer why you hope in the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. . . Your creed is the Scriptures.

Like Miller, we also may misunderstand or misinterpret parts of the Bible. We must avoid pride over our pet interpretations of Bible texts. Scripture alone remains absolutely true-even if our explanation of it

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In my busy world of decisions, programs, and compromises, this trip is the lighthouse which annually brings my heart back home.

Bill Chadwick
Portland, Maine

Advent Christian Witness

THE DESERT DUST preceded our caravan's arrival to the compound. On board the vans, twenty-six people from Maine had endured a 3,000 mile trek to Mexico's Baja peninsula. They came because of a desire to be active participants in world evangelism. For the next seven days, they would shovel, cry, hammer, pray, and learn to love God and each other in a new dimension. They are the latest movement in the legacy of world missions. They are known as short-term lay missionaries.

What are short-term missions?

During the 1980s, a variety of missions organizations began to experience requests from individuals and churches for "projects" which could be done on location in a short period of time, typically ranging from one week to one year. Soon the concept caught on and groups all over North America started traveling to the corners of the earth to pass out Bibles, build hospitals, and share God's love on short-term missions projects.

Many new missions organizations have designed entire programs based on short-term visits from lay volunteers. In Youth With a Mission's *Go Manual*, over 6,000 short-term missions opportunities are listed. Loren Cunningham, the president of YWAM states, "The doors of opportunity. . . have never been so wide open. . . from the crowded cities of Asia to the villages of Africa. The Lord is calling forth an army of workers. This new Macedonian call is not just for seminary-trained missionaries, but for anyone who will take up the challenge of bringing Christ to the nations. There are a multitude of ways to be part of God's new missions army. Whatever your skill, talent, or vocation, God can use you in missions." George Verwer of Operation Mobilization staffs his evangelistic ship with "men and women who commit one year of their lives to reaching the lost for Jesus Christ." Mexican Medical Mission of San Diego has over 600 short-term missionaries per year participating in evangelizing Mexico. The message is clear: short-termers have arrived and are contributing significantly to the efforts of world missions.

Where did they come from?

To understand short-term missions, one first must understand the generation which birthed its popularity. Born between 1947 and 1962, the group known as Baby Boomers have introduced their philosophy of "meaningful experiences" to the world of missions. Forged on the anvil of Vietnam, Watergate, and the civil rights movement, Boomers are far more antiestablishment-oriented than their predecessors. They are brutally pragmatic, encourage innovations, and possess the belief that they will make the world a better place. "More than anything," writes Doug Murren in his book *The Baby Boomerang*, "baby boomers want to be participants. They want to be part of something meaningful." Sending checks to missions' offices doesn't meet this generation's needs; driving nails does. They possess an obsession with contribution; they thrive on Jesus' commission, *go* into all the world.

Although we can trace the current interest in short-term missions projects to the Baby Boomer generation, short-term missions are far from new. The youngest Christian can easily point to the fast-paced, short-term nature of Paul's missionary journeys. In each town, the apostle brought a new group with him, people who agreed to support a project, and he trained them in world evangelization. Names like Timothy, John Mark, Silas, Luke, and a host of others easily fulfilled the requirements of being short-term missionaries. In essence, as Dr. Christy Wilson in his book *Today's Tentmakers* points out, "The apostle Paul was by vocation a tent maker [short-term missionary] who gave himself to missions projects for God." The long-term nature of today's professional missionaries evolved much later in the life of the church. In the beginning, the fast-paced, laity-oriented, "dust off your feet" approach was certainly the norm, as in three hundred short years the gospel went from a message from one man to the religion of the entire Roman Empire.

Do not pass GO

For us, the need for personal involvement stemmed, in part, from our boredom with our church's missions program and our conviction that God expected *more from our lives*. Each year, we held our Penny Crusade but for us this was far from an active role in World Missions. Typically, three or four people would run the whole program; at best we filled our little thermometer up to our final goal of a few thousand dollars. Having seen the faces of Christians in Africa who were hungry for food, pleading for missionaries, and begging for help, such an effort was pale in the face of the need. Paul Borthwick, in his book *A Mind for Missions*, captures Hudson Taylor's vivid description of this very same conviction by God's Spirit, when Taylor observed:

"As the full congregation rose to sing the last hymn, Taylor looked around. Pew upon pew of the prosperous, bearded merchants, shopkeepers, visitors, demure wives in their bonnets and crinolines, scrubbed children trained to hide their impatience; the atmosphere of smug piety sickened him. He seized his hat and left. 'Unable to bear the sight of a congregation of a thousand or more Christian people rejoicing in their own security, while missions are perishing for lack of knowledge, I wandered out on the sand alone in great spiritual agony.'"

In our church, children were not becoming mission-minded; our church was not producing individuals who were called to the field; our involvement seemed desperately short of what Christ had in mind when he said, *"go!"* There had to be something more. . .

As I watched the team unload

their gear, the children from the orphanage, established there in Vizcaino, Mexico, ran out to greet the "missionaries." Although I had seen what happens next many times before, the joy of it still enriches my heart. The gear is left on the ground, and soon several team members are hugging, swinging, and playing with these young souls. Gum's quickly bartered; excitement fills the air; and the miracle of sharing love begins all over again. You can't create one second of that dynamic anywhere else. It is the infectious joy of giving to hearts which are bursting with a desire to receive.

Coming together

The trips to Mexico were the result of our unrest, God's timing, and the encouraging support of those who had been before. Our unrest caused us to look for ways to be involved. God's timing happened to bring the president of Mexican Medical to speak at our church one Sunday night, sharing with us the opportunities. The support came from Hope Church of Lenox, Massachusetts. They sent members of a team who had been to Mexico with Mexican Medical to our church in Portland. They showed us slides and instilled the belief in us that, yes, we too could go.

As in every successful movement, the Lord raised up key leaders who gave fuel to the fire. Ralph organized the dates, costs, flights, ground transportation, fundraisers, and team members. Mark, Charlie, and David organized the construction component of the team. Merry and Jen created the core of our evangelistic outreach, focusing on a Spanish Vacation Bible School featuring songs, puppets, crafts, and lots of free toys for the children. Bernice created grocery lists, meal plans, and organized the preparing, cooking and cleaning crews. Music was created, enthusiasm soared and, in 1992, we did it. We went to Mexico and became part of the Great Commission in a real way.

Stopping short

There are always difficult obstacles to overcome for a short-term mission trip to become a reality in your church. Some are external, such as fear and inexperience. To help overcome this, our church has made it a policy to include on each trip we make, members from other churches. Once these people see how it is done, they often are able to motivate and organize a trip on their own. Our first team contained members of the Oxford, Biddeford, Portsmouth, and Kennebunk Advent Christian Churches. From that trip came Oxford's involvement, and one team member motivated his new home church, State Road in Presque Isle, Maine, to go. This domino effect has grown to involve over eighty people last year. Representing about $80,000, this grass roots movement is making a significant contribution to world evangelization. "Our new medical clinic in Vizcaino," stated Mel Peabody of Mexican Medical, "was richly blessed by the involvement of Advent Christians. Advent Christian architects drew the plans; Advent Christians raised the funds; Advent Christians built it. We think a lot of your denomination because you guys are doers, hard workers and well-organized. Your evangelistic programs bless the local pastors and they look forward to your coming down each year."

Some fears are internal and have always crippled the church. Peter Wagner writes the seven last words of a church are, "We've never done it that way before." This attitude must be overcome. People who kill innova-

tion with this statement will stand on Judgment Day beside the shovel-bearer of the talent buried in the ground. Investments are always risky, but we are encouraged to take risks for the hope of reaching yet another life for Jesus Christ.

Another internal phobia is the tension of finances. These trips cost a lot. One valid concern is: won't we hurt our giving to our church, and damage our existing church programs if we support these trips? John Maxwell, in a sermon series on stewardship, shares this eye-opening principle. "People have many pockets, in each is an amount of potential giving. The rule we need to understand is that they will never give you that money unless you produce a need which opens that pocket."

I saw this principle work in a church service one morning. We had already taken the offering. Then a powerful emotional need was shared from the congregation. Moved by the Spirit, a freewill collection was taken and four hundred and eighty-one more dollars received! The point is obvious. People will give more, not less. Our missions giving in 1991 was $12,500 and four major contributors generated the bulk of that. Since we have begun short-term mission trips, we annually raise about $22,000 for this event. This includes car washes, auctions, solicitations from Kiwanis International, and special concerts and dinners. We also give ten percent of our weekly offerings as a tithe to World Missions and pay full support to our conference and region. That roughly represents a 150% increase in missions giving in $2\frac{1}{2}$ years. Don't forget the pockets.

One last valid concern is: Wouldn't it be better to just send the money instead of wasting it on airfares and food? This statement ignores the fact that people won't give it, and if they don't, the potential for that money never to make it to a project is *very great*. Most American Advent Christians do not realize how corrupt and impoverished mission sites are. Imagine making four dollars a day, living in squalor, and trying to make a life for your wife and six children. Then you receive a check in the mail for 22,000 American dollars. The norm is, that money quickly disappears, and who can blame them? Oversight is essential and a responsible part of our stewardship. There is also the issue of workers. Many cultures, especially in Latin America, do not possess the skills and energy levels of Americans. We are a well-trained, healthy, and gifted nation. Our responsibility to help others is very great.

Personal involvement generates new enthusiasm for missions in the local church. Especially today, when our denomination is desperately trying to generate support, our churches need to be aware of the impact which a personal visit to a mission field has on people's lives. We receive far more than we give when we engage in short-term missions.

The change it makes

Short-term mission experiences often provide the rich spiritual environment which can change one's life. Most people spend a lifetime yearning to have a moment where they can truly talk with God. For many, that moment comes on the mission field. Exhausted, overwhelmed by the need, dependent on God, our ears, hearts, and minds become attentive to his voice. Chris Eaton and Kim Hurst write in their book *Vacations with a Purpose*, " When God wants to teach us something he takes us on a trip. Travel seems to be one of God's favor-

Want to go?

THE EASTERN Regional Association's Commission on Evangelism and Missions has published a manual which will give your church the contents and details of a short-term trip to Mexico. Call us at (603)332-1412, or write to the Eastern Regional Association, P.O. Box 1913, Rochester, NH 03867. The cost of the manual is $5.00. Slide presentations are also available upon request.

ite primers for teaching us about himself. In confronting the unfamiliar we learn to see things as they really are." And here are their stories.

John had it all. The American dream was the reality of his life. A successful career, three great kids, a dedicated wife, nice home, two rental properties, and a pickup truck. Life doesn't get much better than that, yet in John's heart something was missing. One night under the Mexican sky, after a hard day's work at the clinic, God spoke to John. In his heart, John felt God telling him to break away from the bondage of debt, to break free of the bondage of success, and get in touch with what is important in life. John came home and shared his new vision with his wife and together they changed. First, the car was sold, then the rental properties, the house, and John quit his job! They moved back nearer to their families and did it because John wanted to see the people he loves come to know the Lord. John carries a Mexican peso in his pocket and when his finger touches it, he remembers what is important in life. Now he leads short-term mission groups to the Baja from his new church home, in the hope that they too will be drawn closer to God.

On the other side of the coin are the people who have the "missionaries" come. We drastically underestimate the encouragement our enthusiasm and spiritual maturity has on people who struggle daily just to survive. I remember the words of one African student who said, "When you come to us, we see God's angels."

Dr. Luis Gonzales worked at the clinic, but was not a Christian. "Christians in my country" said Luis, "are not very friendly to those of us who are Catholic. My wife and I are looking for something but we don't want to be rude like that. Then when we saw the groups come down from Maine, they spoke to us, invited us for dinner, gave us food, prayed with us, and we said 'yes, this is what we want.'" Dr. Gonzales rode in a truck for five hours with a short-term missionary. By the end of the ride, he had committed his life to Jesus Christ. "Now I must tell my wife and family; now I can help the people not just to be healed physically, but to be healed in their hearts." God uses short-term missionaries.

Alice came because of a desire to help improve our world. We had opened the team up to a select group of non-Christians in the hopes that we could show them a side of Christianity they had never seen before. She worked hard; she fell in love with the Mexican people. She listened to the devotions and sat up late into the night talking to people about God. The last day of our trip, Alice surrendered her life to a God who had become real to her on the Baja.

Confessions of a boomer pastor

There is something romantic, something holy, something adventurous, about ministry on foreign soil. Personally, it is an investment of money and time which tangibly maintains my integrity as a servant of Jesus Christ. Once a year, I do my Christianity in a manner which removes my comfort zones and causes me to experience dependence on the Holy Spirit. For ten days, I sense Paul's vision, Adoniram Judson's compulsion, and Hudson Taylor's desire to stay. I'm a player, I care, and I've laid down my life to demonstrate once again my sincerity to my God. In my busy world of decisions, programs, and compromises, this trip is the lighthouse which annually brings my heart back home. I feel the joy of knowing that I stand on feet which have brought the good news. ❑

A graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Bill Chadwick is pastor of Stroudwater Christian Church (A.C.) in Portland, Maine.

What's Cooking in the New Age Kitchen?

Part Three

Sampling the Entrees

Andy Bjorklund
Seattle, Wash.

WE INITIATED this series on the New Age Movement with an examination of its primary methods of expression, fundamental beliefs, and historical roots. This month we offer a more detailed look at its influence on mainstream society and how it compares with a biblical world view. Let's begin with an inventory of New Age efforts in educational reform, management training, the Environmental Movement, and the unification of religions.

Reconditioning society

In 1980, New Age promoter Marilyn Ferguson specified the importance of public education for cultural transformation in her landmark work, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. Jack Canfield and Paula Klimek had already anticipated the agenda by pioneering "Education in the New Age" workshops for Connecticut public schools. In 1981, Ferguson's close friend, Beverly Galyean, expanded the campaign with "confluent education," offering a distinctive emphasis on the inherently divine nature of humanity. The inherent contradiction between divine virtues and preschooler immaturity did little to deter the nationwide consumption of her product. The trend was becoming entrenched. Sidney Simon followed with "values clarification" curriculum and Lawrence Kohlenberg harmonized with "moral reasoning" programs. Both represented an effort to replace the traditional values that previous public education had rested on with New Age style relativism.

The names of these progressive education alternatives sounded appealing enough, but were actually a disguise for more potent problems. By 1987, testimonies from varied sources revealed that such programs were instructing children in eastern style meditation, communicating with spirit guides, divination, casting spells, levitating objects, invoking healings, initiating out-of-body experiences, and concealing it all from parental awareness.

Transpersonal investments

As in education, a growing New Age influence can be seen in corporate level strategy making and related management training techniques. With the added incentive of financial gain, the response is easily expedited. The pattern began in the Human Potential Movement of the 1970s. Several key individuals successfully transformed the mystical and occult principles within New Age thinking into marketable commodities. Examples include Michael Murphy, founder of the Esalen retreat in Big Sur, California; L. Ron Hubbard, who developed the worldwide Scientology empire; and Werner Erhard, whose widely distributed "est" seminars achieved corporate level distribution for employee training.

Business management professionals embraced these techniques as promising productivity boosters for private enterprise. New Age sympathizer John Naisbitt, author of *Megatrends*, demonstrated the growing appeal in his later book, *Reinventing the Corporation* (1985). Although research by economic analysts seriously questions the effectiveness of New Age training in increasing business productivity, the application of these programs persists. Business leaders are still being encouraged to

accept New Age assumptions of self justification, personal transformation, and unlimited gain. As traditional values continue to erode, so too does the Protestant work ethic rooted in prudence, perseverance, and accountable stewardship.

Rearranging the species

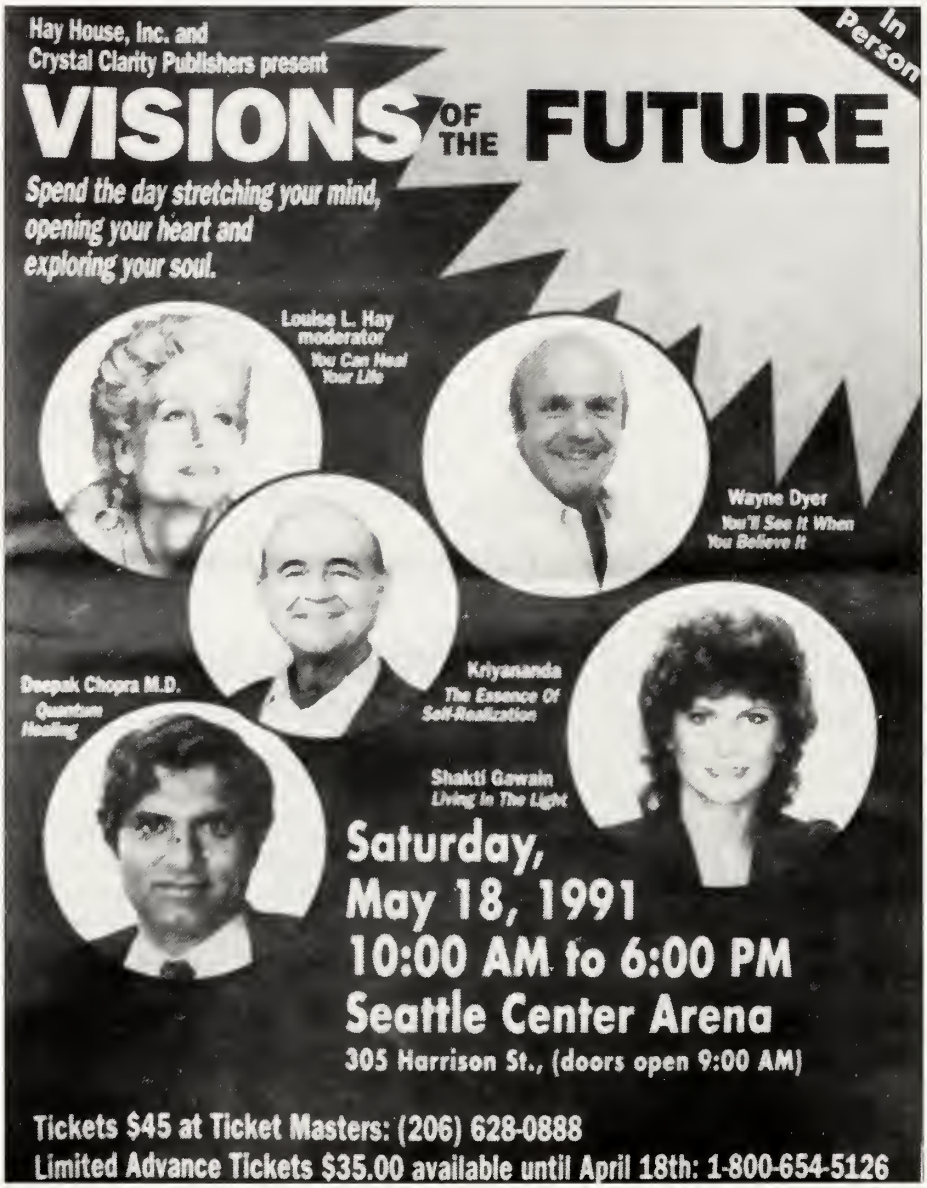
In modern times in the West, devotion to science has often been associated with some degree of religious skepticism. A recognition of the supernatural was regarded as an obstacle to progress. In recent years, however, a surprising number of these respected scientists have been publicly vocal about a distracting contradiction in their cherished theoretical structure: the assumed random chance origin of the universe contrasted with abundant evidence for a highly designed system of obvious purpose. Little did they know that their speculations would help propel a new religious trend. Enter the Gaia theory (named after a Greek earth goddess) to rescue resistant souls from recognizing a Father God.

Gaia theory asserts that the earth and everything upon it is actually alive. All of its species, inanimate material, and interactive characteristics are part of one giant ecosystem. J.E. Lovelock, a British atmospheric scientist, began publishing the Gaia message over 20 years ago, but achieved more recent success through his collaboration with Lynn Margulis, an Amherst microbiologist and first wife of Carl Sagan. Although they have resisted the religious implications of their scientific proclamations, the Gaia craze is becoming another icon for New Age devotion. Varied feminist and ecology based forms of spirituality have found the Gaia message highly compatible with their persistent agendas in witchcraft, goddess worship, and paganism.

The popularity of Gaia theory is further enhanced by the already present environmental crisis. The excessive waste of modern industrial society, combined with over population, poverty, and political confusion has raised the consciousness of our global community. Rather than accurately recognize the shared sinfulness of humanity as the major cause to the problem, "deep ecologists" (the radicals of New Age environmentalism) are quick to indict all who do not share their pantheistic interpretations. Frequently they blame any form of white, male, Christian, analytical, scientific, industrial, or Western culture as the guilty party for the current global mess. In the spirit of the 1960 Counterculture Revolution, current institutions are deemed impotent for addressing the environmental crisis and New Age transfor-

Comparing the Gospels

	Authentic Christianity	New Age Counterfeit
Truth	Based on absolutes	An illusion subject to manipulation
God	A Person	An impersonal substance
Universe	Separate from the Creator	Same as God
Humanity	Finite and dependent on God	Divinely unlimited
Salvation	Through Jesus only	A diversity of paths
Jesus	Uniquely God in human form	One of many mentors to be simulated
Miracles	Real and sometimes counterfeited	Available to all who learn the techniques
Future	Judgment with eternal consequences	A perpetual cycle of advancement without judgment



mation is heralded as the only viable hope.

As the Creation is transfused with divinity by New Age decree, the environmentalist agenda is achieving a significantly higher priority in public policy making. In 1988, Carl Sagan, world renowned astronomer, gathered the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders on Human Survival in Oxford, England, and again in 1990 in Moscow, Russia. Sagan's later networking included the recruitment of New Age advocate James Morton, dean of the New York Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and Vice president Al Gore, author of *Earth In the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (1992). Although some have heralded Gore's posturing as an evangelical contribution to the environmental arena, more astute reviewers have found his book to be doctrinally compromising. New Age views have a wide appeal.

The unification of religions

Most Americans today woefully minimize the inherent conflict between the belief systems of the major world faiths. Peaceful harmony is the overriding priority as attention is directed to minor level similarities. Reinforced by "political correctness," the homogenized approach finds favor within New Age thinking that explains contradictory claims to religious truth as illusory and insignificant. With an emphasis on interconnectedness and the shared divinity of all things, the appealing notion of all religions leading to shared eternal bliss continues to capture its fans.

The impact of Joseph Campbell's 1988 bestseller, *The Power of Myth*, demonstrates how popular New Age syncretism has become. Campbell promoted the notion that all the world's religions are based on psychological myths rooted in every individual. In his framework the entire universe is reflected in the design of each human soul, the holographic principle of New Age culture. Furthermore, the broad mystical appetite of the New Age community has stretched beyond the confines of the established religions. A pronounced fascination with pagan mythologies and ritual is ever present and reaching persons in every walk of life.

As the New Age Movement attempts to be all things to all religions, its assimilation campaign is being demonstrated in the Christian church. Some of the most prominent examples of its infiltration are as follows:

• *Carelessly appropriated information resources:* Many Christian book dealers and radio stations have promoted the near death testimony of Betty Eadie in her book, *Embracing the Light*, for the past year while assuming that it represented biblical Christianity. More complete analysis has revealed that she has a Mormon background and is promoting the New Age proclamations of preexistent spirit life, our shared role in creating the universe, and the shared salvation of all religions.

• *Occult practices disguised as legitimate spiritual disciplines:* In an effort to revitalize their prayer life, many of the saints have been instructed in visualization techniques. While visual imagery can enhance our awareness of God at work, assuming that the results are dependent on the concentrated will of the individual is akin to a centuries-old technique in traditional witchcraft.

• *Christian sponsorship of New Age*

programs: A Course in Miracles, also known as the New age Bible, has been hosted by many churches in a variety of denominations. Although initially appealing with its frequent use of Christian vocabulary, the doctrinal implications of its statements deny the essentials of the Faith in a manner similar to Christian Science and related Mind Science counterfeits.

Which Gospel should it be?

Part of the powerful New Age appeal is that it offers answers and hopes for some of the most vital subjects in life. However, the content of the New Age alternative is a radical contrast to the Christian gospel and robs the individual of eternal life. Let's see why:

Truth: Understanding how we should live is based on an acceptance of a reality that can be known, absolute principles, and rational communication as exhibited in God's nature (Psalm 119:105; 1 Samuel 15:29; Isaiah 55:11). The New Age view prefers mystical shadows which promote relativism, subjective judgments, and illusion as the norm.

God: The Bible presents a Supreme Person as Creator, a uniquely eternal and sovereign being who interacts with us with love (1 Chronicles 16:23-26; Isaiah 45:5; Jeremiah 31:3). In the pantheistic style of the East, New Age proclaims that everything shares in the divine nature which is ultimately an impersonal something.

The Universe: The Bible claims that God created the universe for his own purpose and pleasure, and that we have a role in it accordingly (1 Timothy 4:4-5; Psalm 8:4-8; Romans 12:1-2). The New Age message is that our perception of persons and things existing separately is an illusion which must be overcome in order to progress in life.

Humanity: The Bible informs us that we are finite creatures dependent on God's guidance and provision (Proverbs 3:5-6; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Philippians 4:6-7). The New Age definition says that people are already divine and capable of unlimited transformation through their own efforts.

Salvation: The Bible record presents the moral failure of humanity in Eden and the continuing struggle with the consequences of our sinfulness (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23; James 4:1). The New Age pathway minimizes sin, exalts the individual as a reincarnating being, and defines salvation as a process of self directed evolution.

Jesus: The Bible proclaims Jesus as the only example of divine nature in human form who provides God's only remedy for the problems of sin (Philippians 2:6-8; Corinthians 5:21; Titus 2:13). The New Age gospel denies his unique nature and tries to extend his characteristics to all spiritual explorers.

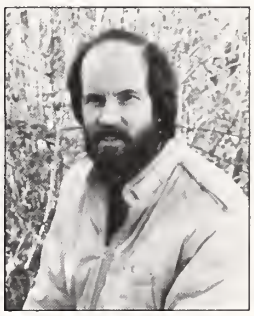
Miracles: The Bible confirms the reality of a supernatural realm and warns of deceptive spiritual forces opposed to God's domain (Deuteronomy 18:20; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 John 4:1). The New Age culture embraces all paranormal phenomenon as divine and encourages the pursuit of it in any form with personal intuition as the primary guide.

The Future: The Bible predicts an end to human history on earth, the culmination of God's plan, and eternal judgment for each person (2 Peter 3:10-13; 2 Samuel 14:14; Ecclesiastes 12:14). The New Age alternative places the outcome under human control with the appealing delusion that humanity is capable of solving all problems on its own.

Back to the salad dressing

Remember that simple recipe for salad dressing comprised of oil, vinegar, and water? Remember what always happens to the ingredients when left sitting still? The New Age effort to mix Christianity with its belief behaves the same. You can shake it up to get the taste you need, but you can never transform one ingredient into the other. Their essential differences remain unalterable.

Unfortunately, preoccupation with mixing in the present can keep our minds off of eternity. But the latter should be our greater concern in communicating the gospel to a New Age participant. How do we penetrate the appealing deceptions of the New Age Movement? Join us next time for a lesson in cooking with the spices of evangelism. ❑



Andy Bjorklund is a veteran observer of pseudo-Christian and non-Christian religious movements including the New Age Movement. He and his wife Pauline live in Seattle, Wash.

Editorial

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Adventists. And many of them viewed the Adventist successors of William Miller with suspicion and distrust.

But that doesn't take away from the fact that Miller started a revolution in how Christians in the United States viewed and proclaimed the second coming of Jesus Christ. And during this month when Advent Christians mark the 150th anniversary of the Great Disappointment, we can pause not only to remember our heritage but commit ourselves afresh to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need in the next few months to hear some good expository preaching from Daniel 2 and other important prophetic passages of Scripture. We need to wrestle in our hearts with what the Bible teaches about the soon return of Christ. And we need to commit ourselves and our energies to Jesus' command at the end of Matthew's gospel, "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Growing Up as an Advent Christian

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

I GREW UP IN an Advent Christian parsonage, the daughter of an Advent Christian minister, which made me slightly out of step with most of my peers. A preacher's kid was always subject to some good-natured ribbing but to be an *Advent Christian* preacher's kid put you in a class by yourself. You not only had to weather the slings and arrows of your more worldly fellow students but also the suspicion of some of your Christian classmates. After all, besides not smoking or swearing you also believed in "soul-sleep!"

My first experience in defending my belief about the state of the dead came when I was in the second grade in Belmont, New Hampshire. It was the end of May and my favorite teacher, Miss Cleveland, had assigned a Memorial Day poem to be copied. When I read the sentence about our brave war dead "who are in heaven" I felt it necessary to set things straight and wrote "who are *not* in heaven."

Miss Cleveland looked over my shoulder to check my penmanship and read with horror what I had written. "You have made a mistake," she pointed out. I assured her that it was not a mistake but exactly what I had intended to write. I know now that Miss Cleveland was a committed Christian, but when she read my words "who are not in heaven" she interpreted it as "who are in hell." If she had asked me about it I would have explained that I didn't believe they were in hell either, but she didn't ask. Instead she came to our house to talk to my mother.

Mom was somewhat embarrassed by the visit but explained things to my teacher's satisfaction. Harmony was restored and life went on! Nothing was ever said by my parents but I had the feeling that I had chosen the wrong place to make a doctrinal statement.

We moved to Danville, Quebec, soon after this experience. Our Advent Christian church there had lots of young people so, at school, there were many other students who shared my "strange beliefs." This made things a lot easier. We, *as a group*, were "different" from others, which is a lot easier than being different all alone. We were satisfied with ourselves; and convinced, of course, that *we were right*."

I entered a Wesleyan Methodist College after high school. Millie Proctor (of Portsmouth, New Hampshire) and I were the only Advent Christians on campus. Soon I had many friends from other Christian churches and I learned to admire and respect them. Our differences seemed unimportant compared with the faith in Christ that we all shared.

The next summer I went with my parents to a revival meeting at Canandaigua, New York. After a wonderful evangelistic sermon the speaker prefaced his altar call by saying, "All of you who know that if you died this minute you would go straight to heaven, stand up!" He was, I believe, trying to separate the sheep from the goats so that he could deal directly with the unsaved, but it put a burden upon the Advent Christians in the congregation.

Fresh from my happy experiences at college I mentally translated what he said to mean "If you belong to Christ stand up." So I stood. Then I noticed my mother, father, and sisters remaining in their seats. They were looking painfully embarrassed but were holding firm to their belief that they would rise from the dead at Christ's return, and only then would they receive their "reward."

A woman who sat in front of us turned and whispered to me, "Aren't your parents and your sisters Christians?"

Then, as my mother had explained my doctrinal statement years before, I found myself explaining, "Of course they are Christians but you see we belong to the Advent Christian Church and we belief that death is a sleep. We believe that when the Lord returns we will be given immortality. We believe that the Judgment comes *after Christ's* return."

I probably did a poor job of defending our position particularly because I was standing and the rest of my family were not. The woman smiled apologetically and the last hymn was announced at which my family stood.

There are times when we need to state our beliefs clearly and there are times when, for the general good, we should refrain from stating them. Just when is the right time to speak up is for each of us to decide with God's help. I probably should have copied the poem without comment. On the other hand, I have always felt guilty for standing up when the rest of my family stayed in their seats.

I no longer think that my church has all the truth as I did in those early days. However, I would hate to see the time when we, as Advent Christians, are no longer different but just like everybody else! We are strongest when we dare to be different: when we *lovingly* but *boldly* proclaim the truth of the Gospel *as we see it*! ❑

My Pilgrimage

Empty Nest?

Linda Leavitt

I WAS AWAKENED by strange noises coming from the bathroom. Looking at the clock I observed it was midnight. I got up and stumbled towards the sound. The night-light softly illuminated the hallway and as I approached the doorway I could see a small form sitting in the bathroom sink! Our two-year-old granddaughter, Katlyn, was sitting "quite unclothed" in the bathroom sink brushing her teeth! (How she was able to accomplish such a feat remains a mystery!) As I walked into the bathroom she looked up and smiled at me with the most innocent expression, saved for such an occasion as this. Her eyes ,though, gave away all that lay beneath. As I lifted her from the sink, dried and dressed her once again, many thoughts and memories ran through my mind.

We are fairly recent empty nesters. Two years ago, our last child married and moved out of our home. So we presumed that this would be the period of our lives when peace and quiet (including uninterrupted nights' sleep) would be the norm. I had started back to school to pursue a degree in counseling, and we had been able to do some of the things together we had wanted to do for some time. But our daughter's two-week visit turned into nearly two months of diapers and bedtime stories! What happened?

It seems like I had hardly relearned how to cook spaghetti for two when this kind of "thing" began to occur. Our children, with their own children, began to reappear on our doorstep. And there were others! Where were they coming from? Our home seems to have revolving doors and our spare bedroom is rarely empty! Now don't think too badly of us, please. But you must understand that we have never laid claim to the "gift of hospitality." Both of us tend to be perfectionists when it comes to the housekeeping and the way we like our "things" organized. And we have plans!!

It's been our observation that many marriages have broken up in the "empty nest" years. If the marriage is being held together by the children, and for their sake alone, there is little hope for the two strangers those children leave behind. That's not our problem! Our problem is not that the children are no longer there to give meaning to our marriage. In fact we have cherished the time we have had to do the things we were unable to do when they were home. But it seems they're always home! And there are those others as well! We continue to ask

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

November

1 Pray for Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** and Executive Vice-president **David Ross** as they prepare for an overseas trip to the Advent Christian mission field in India next month.

2 Praise God for the opportunities he continues to provide **Beryl Joy Hollis, Barbara White,** and **Marion Damon** for communicating the gospel and developing leaders in India.

3 Pray that God will **raise up Advent Christian missionaries** to replace the three from the India field who will retire next August.

4 Praise God that Advent Christian congregations in **India** are growing and that lives are being touched for Jesus Christ through those churches.

5 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to **Margaret Helms** as she provides leadership for the Advent Christian church planting project in Ono Newtown, Japan, while the Lays are home on furlough.

6 Pray that God will give **Karen Rigney** an extra measure of clarity as she is currently involved in language school in Japan.

7 Pray that God will richly bless the work of **Steven and Ann Lay** as they communicate the work of Advent Christian missions to congregations in the Midwest.

8 Praise God for the dedicated work of **Japanese** Advent Christian pastors and church leaders.

9 Pray that God will give wisdom and direction to students at **Oro Bible College** as they prepare for Christian service in the Philippines.

10 Praise God for **David Vignali**'s service with Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

11 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in the **Philippines** will sense God's leading as they serve him today.

12 Praise God for the growing number of Advent Christian congregations participating in **short-term mission projects.**

13 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries to serve in our newest mission field—**Honduras.**

14 Praise God for the support that Advent Christian churches provided to World Missions in 1994 through **Penny Crusade.**

15 Pray that God will guide Advent Christian national missionaries in Malaysia—**Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam, James and Mercy Devadasson,** and **Ruth Devairakkam**—as they proclaim the gospel in this officially Islamic nation.

16 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Malaysia** will experience God's protection from persecution in a nation where it is "illegal" to speak to a Muslim about Jesus Christ.

17 Praise God for Advent Christian congregations in **Nigeria** that are expanding as they communicate the gospel.

18 Pray that God will give strength and guidance to Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Nigeria.**

19 Praise God for the faithfulness of Advent Christian leaders in **Liberia** despite the devastating impact of the civil war in that nation.

20 Pray that **God's peace** may come to Liberia as the gospel is proclaimed there.

21 Praise God for the many years of leadership and service that **Richard Thurston** provided as Central Region superintendent and pray that God will richly bless him as he enters a new area of ministry.

22 Pray that God will give wisdom and direction to regional superintendents: **Clinton Taber, W. James Smith, Marshall Tidwell,** and **Larry Withrow.**

23 Praise God for the strong commitment that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** have for ministry in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

24 Pray that the Lord will touch lives as the Ssebikindus proclaim the gospel in **Memphis.**

25 Pray that God will provide strength to each of the workers at the **denominational offices** in Charlotte.

26 Praise God for the Christian commitment of students at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico.

27 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they provide leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

28 Pray that God will bless the work of **Christian missionaries** throughout the world as they proclaim the good news of God's love.

29 Thank God for his **faithfulness and mercy** which he demonstrates to us in so many ways.

30 Pray that God will give **your pastor** strength, wisdom, and courage for the responsibilities and demands of ministry.

Disappointment continued from page 6

should be faulty. Bible study calls for a humility that recognizes our own fallibility and frailty, features that the Bible does not share. Blessed are those Christians who can survive with true humility the failure of their own interpretations and yet continue to trust in God's written Word.

Lesson five: Be patient

The Great Disappointment calls us to look beyond today's heartaches and to take the long view. Discouragement is always short-sighted. It can see only today. It makes the present moment appear to be all there is, or ever will be. Yet the Lord has promised "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28). By his grace, we need to look beyond the discouraging present to the glorious future God has promised to his people.

The disappointed Millerites could not have begun to understand the long-range effects of their ministry. Yet their efforts helped to create America's evangelicalism of today and their once-ridiculed proclamation of Christ's premillennial Second Advent has since become the dominant Christian hope. Even when we think we have failed, all of us need to see beyond the present in the expectation that God will eventually bring good out of our most trying circumstances.

Remember this: The fact that Jesus did not return on October 22, 1844, doesn't mean he isn't coming back at all. We may not know *when* Christ will appear, but we know *that* he will. Our duty, then, is to remain prepared for his coming. Miller's advice to his fellow Adventists is still timely after 150 years: "Brethren, hold fast; let no man take your crown. I have fixed my mind on another time, and here I mean to stand until God gives me more light, and that is *today, today,* and *today,* until he comes. ❑

Empty Nest? continued from page 17

God, why. I'm sure he will reveal the answer to us in his time. And I'm sure there is some moral to all of this. But I think I recognize that vehicle coming down our drive, and there are suitcases strapped to the roof!

We really do love our children and grandchildren and those "others." Empty nest? I guess there are some that really are and maybe, just maybe. . . we could "loan" them some of our overflow? ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Maturity begins when we're content to feel we're right about something without feeling the necessity to prove someone else wrong.
—*Sidney J. Harris*

The winning team, like the conquering army, claims everything in its path and seems to say that only winning is important. Yet victory has very narrow meanings and can become a destructive force. The taste of defeat has a richness of experience all its own.
—*Bill Bradley in* Life on the Run

All of us are too eager to speak of our own special interests. We need to raise our sights to the common good. We need a vision of the common good that respects our traditions as inviolable but at the same time recognizes that we do live with people with whom we fundamentally disagree.
—*James Davison Hunter in* Leadership *(Spring 1993)*

If we are even half serious about Christian discipleship, we will always be a security risk in the eyes of the guardians of earthly securities and the proponents of grand projects for social transformation.
—*Richard John Neuhaus in* Building the Free Society

America's political order, in the form of representative democracy, and America's economic order, in the form of free market capitalism, were given historic vindication through the second Russian revolution. But there are three—not two—parts to the ordering of the American republic. Transformations and corruptions in America's third order—the moral and cultural order—are casting a shadow over her triumphs in the political and economic orders.
—*Os Guiness*

. . .while the world still regards the United States as the leading economic and military power on earth, this same world no longer beholds us with the same moral respect it once did. When the rest of the world looks at America. . . they see no longer a "shining city on a hill." Instead they see a society in decline with exploding rates of crime and social pathologies.
—*William Bennett, in a lecture to the Heritage Foundation*

The American Christian novelist faces a peculiar dilemma today. . . His dilemma is that though he professes a belief which he holds saves himself and the world and nourishes his art besides, it is also true that Christendom seems in some sense to have failed. Its vocabulary is worn out. . .The old words of grace are worn smooth as poker chips and a certain devaluation has occured, like a poker chip after it is cashed in.
—*Walker Percy*

We mistake activism in the streets and public relations proclamations with actually living the life and walking with Jesus Christ. Confusing the gospel with politics is a major mistake. Being politically involved is good, but with two exceptions. The church should not be involved in party politics; and, when ordained ministers get too involved in politics, they denigrate the gospel, and give the impression that God sides with this or that party. The church as an institution, and we as ordained ministers, need to realize that the moment we get dragged into party politics, we are tainting the gospel with the flaws of that party, as well as identifying with its strengths.
—*Luis Palau in* National and International Religion Report

in other words. . .

Where is the locus of God's truth to be found? To the pagan who heard the voice of the gods within, who listened to the whisperings of intuition, and to the modern who similarly listens within for the voice of self, the answer is the same. For the Israelite, it was different. The Bible is not a remarkable illustration of what we have already heard within ourselves; it is a remarkable discovery of what we have not and cannot hear within ourselves. Thus our inward sense of God and our intuitions about meaning are irrelevant in any effort to differentiate biblical truth from pagan belief. It is how we apply ourselves to learn what God has disclosed of himself in a realm outside of ourselves that is important.
—*David Wells in* No Place for Truth

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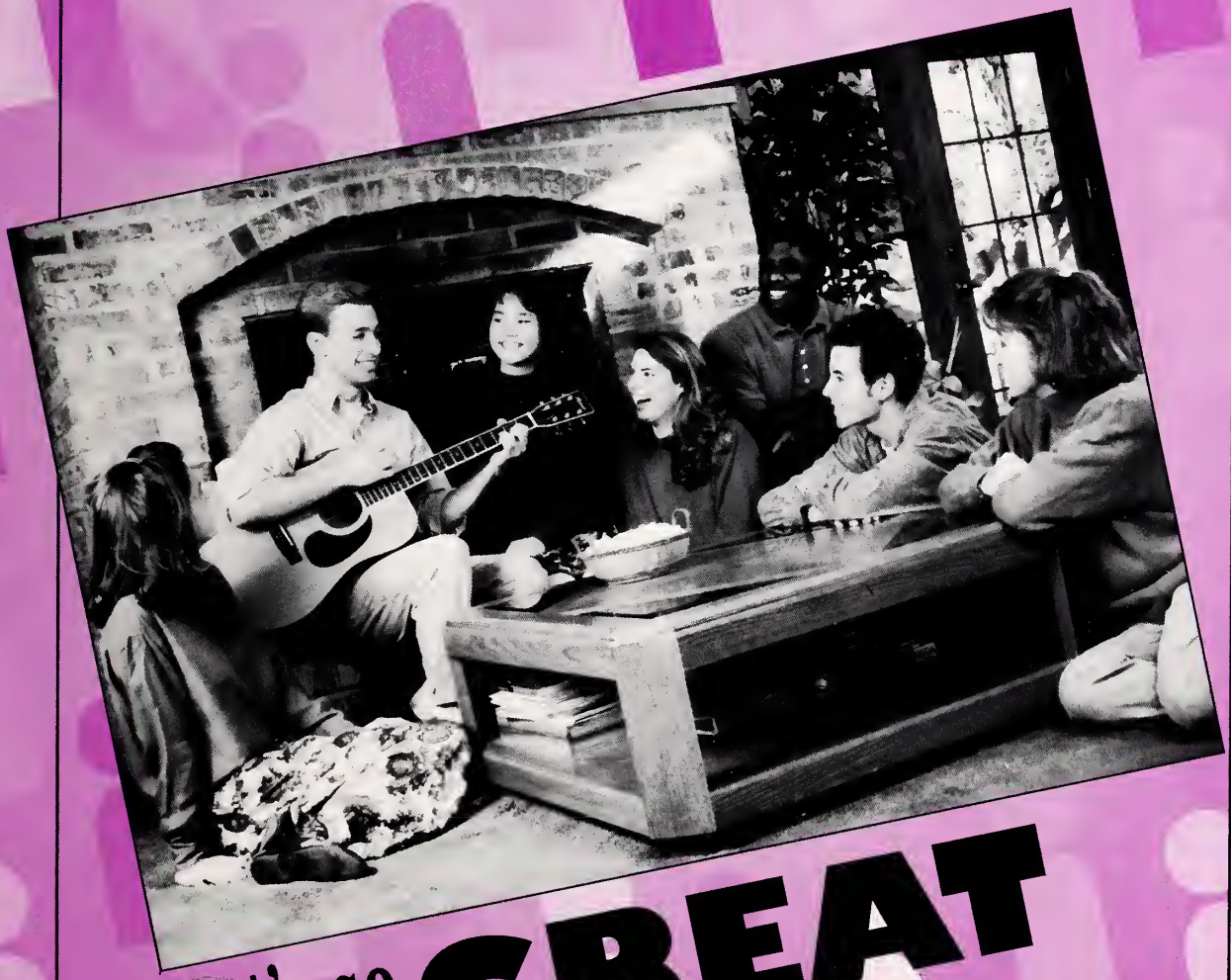

What's so GREAT about the Great Commission?

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We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by our works. Wilsey McKnight focuses on the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ as the essence of Christian faith.

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"Go and make disciples" is Jesus' command to his followers.
photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

THE GIFT

SOMETIMES THE best programs on television are the commercials. Catchy jingles, cute slogans, and outrageous humor all designed to convince you that using their product will make living easier and possibly transform your life. When you think about the daunting task Madison Avenue ad agencies face—building product awareness by convincing you and millions of others in thirty seconds that what they're selling is the greatest thing since sliced bread—no wonder commercials are the source of some of the best creativity on television. Little wonder, too, why cynicism abounds within our society.

Everyone has something to sell. We've watched all the claims, heard all the promises. And we've found they don't measure up. The politicians know how distrustful we are of commercials and their promises. That's why most political advertising is negative—designed to convince you that if a candidate's opponent is elected, we're in for the worst disaster since the Great Depression.

The good news of Christian faith

"Have I got a deal for you!" the phone solicitor announces. And instinctively we know it's too good to be true. Cultivating a healthy skepticism is important, especially when evaluating the outrageous claims of advertisers or the jaded assertions of political candidates. But if we're not careful, our skepticism can turn into an ugly cynicism that deafens our ability not only to listen to those we love but to hear the good news of the Christian faith. At the heart of the gospel is a declaration that has stunning implications: Our salvation is not something we earn through good deeds or religious acts. It's God's gift to us through Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3 is one of my favorite passages of Scripture. In response to several false teachers, the apostle Paul reminds his readers that the core of Christian faith is God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ. Look at verses four through six in that passage. I think behind these words, Paul suggests the following; "Suppose it's true that faith in Jesus Christ is not enough. Suppose you need more. If that's the case, look at my credentials. I was circumcised at the proper time. I've invested my life in keeping the Jewish law and in defending the Jewish faith. And if religious heritage and good works matter, I'll be standing at the head of the line in front of all of you."

But beginning in verse seven, the apostle reminds us that his religious heritage and good works mean nothing in terms of his eternal destiny. "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." All of his credentials, all of his religious activities are nothing compared to knowing Jesus Christ. Paul discovered that God's grace lies at the heart of Christian faith. We cannot earn God's favor—it is a gift with no strings attached.

"The time has come. The kingdom of God is near," Jesus tells his listeners. "Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:14-15). In our cynical, jaded age we look for the fine print—the hidden agendas and secret costs. Where are the rules? Where are the legal codes? Isn't that what religion is about? The Christian faith responds with a radically different notion. We're to recognize that all of our attempts to pursue our own self-interests or please God with our good works are futile. Only through Jesus Christ can our relationship with God be restored. It's not what we do, it's what Jesus has done for us.

We live by grace

Not only are we saved by God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ, but we live by that grace. It's easy to believe that grace applies only to our decision to follow Christ, not to daily Christian living. Somehow, we think that God leaves us to struggle with Christian living on our own.

But the apostle Paul gives us a different per-

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What's so "GREAT" about the *Great Commission?*

Dann Spader with Cheryl Ewings
Wheaton, Ill.

SOMEONE said, "If you want to make Christians feel guilty just talk about prayer, evangelism, or devotions." No matter how much we're doing in these areas, we always feel a need to do more. A recent George Barna survey indicates that 71% of Christians don't share their faith with others. Conversely, only 24% of pastors consider their lay-people well prepared to evangelize others. Why do we feel guilty, yet share Christ so little? I believe that one of the reasons is because normal, everyday Christians don't understand the simple mandate of Matthew 28 where Jesus explained his commission and strategy to his disciples.

What prevents "Joe or Jane Christian" sitting faithfully in the pews every Sunday from feeling a part of the Great Commission on a day-to-day basis? It is my belief that there are three myths the modern church has accepted that prevent us from *doing* what Jesus commanded.

Three myths

Myth #1: *"The Great Commission is about missions, and I don't feel called."* This myth allows us to give the work of the Great Commission over to those "called" full-time to that task. The Great Commission is an overseas task—not something for me here at home. Anyway, I've never been "called" therefore, it's not for me. I'll help my pastor in my spare time, but that's all I can ever do!

Myth #2: *"The Great Commission is about evangelism and that's not my gift."* In Dick Innes' classic book *I Hate Witnessing*, he sums up the feelings of so many. "Since I don't have the gift of evangelism... therefore I sure can't be involved in Great Commission living." However, if you study the Great Commission, the first step of making disciples is simply to go... be a friend of sinners... like Christ was. Everyone can do that!

Myth #3: *"The Great Commission is great, therefore, beyond me. I'm just a normal Christian."* Jesus never named this passage the "Great Commission." That title was affixed at a later date. I don't think Jesus would have liked the term, the "Great Commission." He saw it as a normal everyday way of life... for even the likes of simple fishermen and tax collectors. It was not for the elite—it was for everyone.

A summary of our Lord's life

The Great Commission needs to be restored to the *heart* of the American church. The flame that burned so brightly in the heart of Jesus can ignite the church. *Bibliotheca Sacra* reported that "Out of 350,000 local congregations that blanket the United States, some 60,000 report not even a single convert in a year's time."

Jesus didn't live one way and challenge his followers to live differently.

I don't think Jesus would have liked the term, the "Great Commission."

Jesus was known to be a friend to sinners—are we?

The Great Commission is the shortest synopsis you can find of Christ's life. As you carefully read Matthew 28, the Master says, (paraphrased) *"Now go and do like I did."* Jesus, while he was with us on the earth, walked, talked, and breathed a Great Commission lifestyle. It was Jesus' life vision. And he wants the Great Commission lifestyle to be the norm for the Christian life. Somewhere along the way, we've gotten off track and made the Jesus' Commission so *great*, it's unattainable for Joe or Jane Christian in the local church. Jesus never called it the "Great" Commission, he just lived it every day of his life.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

In looking at this passage we see only *one* command. When I am speaking to groups around the country and I question them about what that command from Jesus was, they invariably shout "Go." Yet, the only command of this passage is to "make disciples." However, there are three participial phrases with action words which describe how Christ wanted us to go about making disciples as we participate in our everyday living.

Action Word #1: *Go.* As you go through your life, at school, work, or in your neighborhood make disciple-making a part of your daily life. Jesus was known to be a friend to sinners. Are you? Christians should live an intentional lifestyle of continuously building friendships with non-Christians and seeking to inject God into those friendships.

Action Word #2: *Baptizing them.* This action word depicts helping someone go the next step and become established in their Christian faith. This was not complicated, it was simply helping people grow in their knowledge of Jesus. The act of baptism in the New Testament was an outward act which denotes the inward commitment of belief.

Action Word #3: *Teaching to obey.* These words demonstrate our follow-through in the cycle of helping people help others come to a knowledge of Christ. Reproducing in others the desire and willingness to walk as Jesus walked.

These three action words in a simple way reflect the process of making disciples. Not complicated, but simply relationships with people at various stages of walking with Christ. Our job—no matter what stage people are at—is to simply befriend them and challenge them to go deeper with Christ. This is called "making disciples."

The WOW of Christianity

We begin to "make disciples" by working within our sphere of influence: elementary students reaching elementary students, high schoolers reaching high schoolers, homemakers reaching homemakers, office workers reaching office workers, retirement home residents reaching retirement home residents. It's a natural progression of our life into our own circle of relationships. Together we can penetrate this generation for Jesus Christ. Your peers cannot be reached by your pastor or missionary. Jesus placed into your life those people that can only be reached by you! The WOW of Christianity is experienced by Winning Our World for Christ.

Brainstorm some ways to intentionally reach your world for Christ. Do you like to bowl? Join a bowling league to cultivate relationships with non-Christians. Or, develop relationships with the parents on your child's sports team. The key here is to make the relationships *intentional* for loving them into the kingdom of Christ. Jesus was known to be a friend to sinners—are we?

I have sought to put this into practice in my own life by developing intentional relationships with people who live in the 95 homes in my subdivision. They are the natural arena for me to "make disciples." I watch Monday Night Football at the neighbor's home with other non-Christians to develop relationships with men, just like me. We also spend time going out for breakfast and playing on a subdivision baseball team. I carve out periods of time in my schedule for the development of those relationships where I can sow the seed of the gospel, cultivate it over the long haul and then, prayerfully, see some of those seeds come to fruition. My prayer life, my quiet time, and my priorities in daily living is always placed against the grid of the Great Commission challenge in my everyday living.

Today I would like to challenge you to make Jesus' Commission an everyday "Great" part of your life. Jesus lived it, and so can you. ❑

Dann Spader is co-author of Growing a Healthy Church *(Moody Press) and director of Sonlife Ministries in Wheaton, Ill.*

photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

Our ADVENTURE With Home Schooling

George and Laura Karl
Melrose, Mass.

IT WAS THE FALL of 1985 and our oldest child, a son, was only four. Our next child, a daughter, had just turned one (we now have four children). We traveled "west" along with a group of others with similar convictions to be pioneers. Actually what we were doing was going to Brattleboro, Vermont, to attend a home schooling seminar. Back in 1985 the home schooling movement was in its pioneering stage and few people considered it a viable option for their children. Almost everyone, including Christians, would question your wisdom and sanity when you told them you were planning to home school your children. But we had a passionate conviction from God that it was his will for us to home school our children. Because of this conviction we were not dissuaded by people's responses. Through the years (we have

just begun our ninth year) our conviction has continued to be strong.

Not easy but rewarding

When we began our pioneering journey with home schooling we didn't know what to expect. We didn't know how. We didn't know the advantages or the disadvantages. We simply carried a conviction and thus a burden. And we have found that we can do it! There is an abundance of Christian-oriented curriculum that can be purchased from many publishers. There is legal help available from the Home School Legal Defense Association. There are local support groups where other home schoolers can share their joys and frustrations. And at most times, there is even encouragement from the local school committee and superintendent.

We have also found that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. The only disadvantage we have found is that the primary teacher, the one who is at home the most with the students, does not get a break. You always have children! You can't pack their lunch and have them go off to school for six or seven hours. You don't have the time to do all the other things you want to do. It's a full-time job, and when you have an active three-year-old it only makes home schooling more difficult. But even this disadvantage is in one sense an advantage, for the most significant aspect of home schooling is the opportunity to instill your biblical convictions and moral beliefs. No institution including Sunday school or a Christian school is able to do that. The home schooling family more than any other is able to fulfill the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:5-7, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Through the years we have found other significant advantages. We've been able to help our children to not be exposed to excessive peer pressure. They have friends at church and in our neighborhood. But they do not have to withstand so much of the blatant sin in our world. As a result they have positive peer relationships, they relate to and show care and consideration to adults of all ages, they respect us as parents and treat their siblings with equal respect.

A third major advantage is our closeness as a family. Our family is where our children receive their primary affirmation. Our home is where our children spend most of their awake time. We have the flexibility to take vacations and field trips when we want to take them. In spite of times of tension and frustration, home schooling has been a great factor in the quality of relationship we have with our children. Closeness has only increased our love.

Thinking about home schooling?

Maybe you are thinking about following the trail that has been blazed by home schooling pioneers. Here are some things to consider and do.

1. Be sure that God is leading you to be a home schooling family. It is not easy. It is not glamorous. At least one parent has to make a great sacrifice of personal time and career aspirations.

Why I LIKE to be home schooled

I like being home schooled because I get to spend more time with my family and sometimes go on field trips, and have fun. In February we get to have a three-week vacation every year and go to Disney World! Almost every year we get out from school before most kids! We also have shorter days than other boys and girls!

by Kathleen Karl
Age 10, Grade 5

Why I like to BE HOME schooled

I like home schooling because I get to spend more time with my family and the opportunity for higher learning. My family is very important to me so I want to spend as much time as possible with them. Sometimes things get a little tough but we pull through. The standards are higher but I learn more because I learn one-on-one. In regular schools the teacher can't spend time just with you so the learning is not as concentrated. You don't make as many friends but you grow closer to your family. Even so, I still have many friends from church. Home schooling is hard, but it was what God meant for me.

by George Karl III
Age 13, Grade 8

2. Be clear as to why you know God is leading you to be a home schooling family. For us, we wanted to instill our own biblical convictions and moral beliefs in our children. This can be especially important when dealing with your school committee or superintendent.

3. Be agreed as husband and wife. This doesn't mean that a single parent cannot home school. If anything, in light of the turmoil many children have gone through when parents have divorced, it is even more important for a single parent to consider home schooling even though the task is even more difficult. Two single parent families in our church have benefited greatly from being home schooled.

But where there is a father and a mother in the home, they need to be in agreement. There needs to be full emotional support for the primary teacher as well as a sharing of teaching responsibilities. It's important to know from day one that it is not the mother's sole responsibility for home schooling the children. If she is choosing to stay at home she has just as much of a job in running the household as the father has as he goes out of the home to work.

Home schooling is an additional job! As much as possible the home schooling responsibilities need to be shared. This past January George approached our church asking for a ten-percent reduction in time commitment as well as salary so he could have more time to teach the children. He teaches George III science, history, math, and weekly reader; Kathleen the same, and Allison weekly reader. He also does most of our field trips.

4. Gather information. Talk to home schoolers; they are all around. Go to a home school support group. Go to a home schooling convention. You will need to find out about the legal requirements in your state and attempt to be in compliance with them. You will need to check out curriculum options.

5. Start down the trail! It's never easy being a pioneer, but if God is leading you, you will make it!

George and Laura Karl have home schooled their children since 1985. George is pastor of Faith Evangelical Church (A.C.) in Melrose, Mass.

WHY I like to be home schooled

I like to have my mom as my teacher. I also like to have my dad as the principal My days are shorter than the public schools.

by Allison Karl
Age 7, Grade 2

Editorial from page 3

spective in Romans 12. Eugene Peterson puts it so well in his paraphrase; "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him." My acceptance with God is secure because of my identity in Jesus Christ. So living by grace means offering my life to God and allowing him to work his will as I face the daily events of life.

God's grace stands at the heart of the Christian faith. It needs to stand at the center of how every Advent Christian congregation proclaims the gospel to people. Jesus Christ offers freedom from sin's bondage and a fresh new way to live. The Master declares, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). ❑

Thank You, Apostle Paul

Wilsey McKnight
Highland Village, Texas

THE APOSTLE Paul, on his first missionary journey, established churches in Antioch, in Pisidia, in Iconium, in Lystra, and in Derbe. These communities were located in the southern portion of Galatia. His message to the Gentiles was simple—"by the grace of God, a person is saved through faith in Jesus Christ." Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, it is the gift of God—not works" (Ephesians 2:8). To the Romans he wrote, "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:22).

After Paul had gone back to Antioch of Syria, other Christian Jews visited the new churches in Galatia, informing the new Gentile converts that several ceremonial practices of the Old Testament, including circumcision, were binding on the New Testament Christian church. This was in opposition to Paul's teaching, and understandably, Paul was disturbed.

Paul wrote to the Galatian churches saying, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. . . evidently some people are throwing you into confusion, and trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. . . I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel that I preached is not something man made up. I did not receive it from some man. . . I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7; 11-12). Throughout the rest of the letter Paul emphasized that we cannot work out our salvation by observing laws. Instead, salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'the righteous will live by faith'. . . You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:11; 26).

Paul's doctrine of "salvation through faith" was clearly presented in his letters. He wrote the message to the Ephesian church that I quoted above. He wrote to the Christians in Rome, stating: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Romans 10:9-10).

Paul and his friend and companion, Barnabas, took the question of being "saved by faith only" to the church leaders in Jerusalem. The first known church-wide council was held in which the apostles and church leaders were present. The decision of the council was stated in a letter to the Gentiles, which read: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality" (Acts 15:28-29). (If this letter had been addressed to us in our present day culture, the first three items would not have pertained to us. However, the fourth—to abstain from sexual immorality—makes us aware of one of the major sins of our society. This sin too often reaches into our churches, too.)

We can receive two lessons from Paul's letter to the Galatians.

1. Our salvation is only through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As quoted above from Romans 10:9-10, it is necessary to demonstrate our faith, too.

2. Christians need to live good and godly lives, even though we are not saved by our goodness. Unfortunately, since the church teaches righteous living, many in our society, even some in our churches think that they will enter the kingdom of heaven through their goodness. Not so! Right living without faith may have temporal rewards, but not eternal ones. James, in his letter, put it this way: "I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18). Let's follow Jesus' example! ❑

Since the church teaches righteous living, many think that they will enter the kingdom of heaven through their goodness.

A graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (D. Min.), Wilsey McKnight has pastored several Advent Christian congregations and lives in Highland Village, Texas.

God's Graciousness Through My SUFFERING

Gertrude Isaac
Seattle, Wash.

AFTER 43 years with a wonderful husband, I am now alone. One Friday morning about 6 o'clock, I found my husband collapsed on the bathroom floor. Although the medics worked over him for a considerable time he could not be revived.

Let me tell you about the graciousness of God. When I married Tom, I had no assurance about the length of our life together. No one has that, so 43 years was a terrific bonus for which I'm thankful. Together we experienced several health crises but during the last ten years of Tom's life, his health was on a constant decline. The final crisis could come at any moment. God was forewarning me that I could not have him forever. I was thankful for that advance notice. It helped prepare me even though it was a heavy thought to carry through everyday activities.

God gave us five children all of whom are Christians, and those who have children are teaching faithfully the ways of God to young hearts. Many times Tom and I thanked God with tears of joy for the work he had done in their lives.

God also worked in our hearts so that I do not have a load of regrets about our relationship to struggle with now. That keeps me from always looking back with a negative focus. What a blessing. Not every wife feels that she is truly loved and cherished, but God had permitted me to experience both.

A graveside service was held on the morning of the memorial service with many present who could not come later. The memorial service will forever be an inspiration to me. It was one of triumph, of glory to God, and appreciation for Tom. The fact that so many came to the service comforted me. They too loved Tom. What a blessing to have an appropriate ending for Tom's life.

When one has spent a lifetime with another and has learned the true value of that person, it's joyful to discover that others also have valued that person. Words of appreciation for Tom meant a lot to me then and still do today.

God had so filled me with thanksgiving that I could not ask, "Why?" Besides, he orders the universe aright, and he died for me. With love, intelligence, and power like that who in their right mind could second guess God?

Miss Tom? Of course, I do. One of the things I noticed first was that my life lost a lot of its structure. I felt adrift. I had to handle all the business, even some leftovers from the office. My social contacts were smaller. I talked to the Lord a lot and felt his loving comfort. I found myself in a sense of wondering and excitement as to how God was going to take care of this widow. Psalm 146:9 tells of his giving relief to orphans and widows. Psalm 46:1-3 reminds us that God is our place of refuge and not to fear. It's so important that we trust God. No verses can minister fully to me unless I trust his Word. Psalm 71:1 is an appropriate prayer.

God used people to minister to me

Let me tell you how God ministered to me through his servants:

- Pastor Rick Reynolds spent a good deal of time with our family and his presence was such a comfort. He melted into the family in such a way that there were no awkward moments and we could feel his loving support.
- The congregation served a remarkable buffet after the memorial service to all who could stay and partake. It made it possible to speak with many.
- The church also sent food to the house so we could more easily take care of necessary business connected with the memorial service.
- My daughter gave me companionship as no other could. For several months she gave me special attention. The four boys and families were also present but soon had to leave to resume their own responsibilities.
- At times like this many things seem to break. My washer and dryer did just that. A good fishing buddy of Tom's and his wife presented me with a new used set. What a help that was.
- A couple of friends gave books. One was written by Catherine Marshall and the other was poems by Ruth Graham. Both were good choices.
- Many were the cards, luncheons, and telephone calls.
- There were the loving gifts to the memorial fund.
- Of the many visits from friends, one stands out in particular, that was former Pastor Clio Thomas and his

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The "Answer-Book" Game

Mary Jane Stone
Portland, Maine

EPHESIANS 6:17 states, "take. . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

In the apostle Paul's time, a Roman sword was a formidable weapon, standing about four feet high. A soldier needed both hands and lots of muscle and practice to use it efficiently. Spiritual warfare demands practice in using God's Word effectively, including skills in finding references. There is probably no more valuable skill you could teach in one week to a group of children than how to find their way around the Bible, the answer book to life. I have seldom seen such excitement as resulted from a Bible search game my friend, Bonnie Helms and I field-tested recently.

We used a Bible Jeopardy-type game at the Big Lake Youth Camp, (ages eight to fourteen) in Princeton, Maine. It was a daily all-camp activity with qualifying rounds Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Thursday and Friday were semi-finals. On Saturday we held the final round in the tabernacle before evening service. All of the campers participated in the qualifying round, even those who were afraid to try at first.

The point of the game was to find the Bible reference and answer the question first, not the recall of facts. Contestants could give the answer if they knew it "for sure." If wrong, the points were subtracted, which quickly discouraged guessing.

Bonnie Helms designed the game. There were twenty-four categories, including: Numbers, Fathers and Sons, Weapons, Fruits and Vegetables, Wisdom, Mothers and Daughters, and Geography. Bonnie wrote two hundred forty questions on 3x5 cards for the qualifying rounds. Each question had the Bible reference and answer on the back of the card. Many queries covered the same information phrased in a different way to give an opposite answer. For example, "Eve's first son was. . . or Eve's second son was. . . " There were no questions of pure recall. Factual information was needed, so differing Scripture translations were not a problem. Questions varied in difficulty with some very simple ones. On the semi-finals the questions were taken from Bible Trivia, children's level, with the adult level used for the final round. (We found some errors in the Bible Trivia game so you may need to check questions for accuracy.)

I constructed the board with four rows of envelopes for categories, and five envelope columns for question values. (100, 200, 300, 400, 500; and Double Jeopardy values 200, 300, 400, 600, 800, and 1000.) Double value, harder questions, were written on different colored 3x5 cards, and both were placed in the envelope at the start. Titles of each category were paper clipped to the board. My Dad's antique bells were the signals. We had a "spotter" to decide who rang in first. One Jeopardy-type round took about forty minutes to play.

With twenty-nine campers, there were six qualifying rounds with five on each team. With five contestants, anxiety was shared. Teams were assigned heterogeneously including boys and girls and differing ages. Most of the audience were also looking up each reference for practice. They knew their turn was coming.

During Camp Bible Study, Bonnie taught the children how to look up Bible references, using the Table of Contents. Games and puzzles that coordinated with the daily lesson gave more practice in using the Bible.

Among the children were varying levels of experience in finding Bible references. I told the contestants that just as practice improves your basketball, tennis, musical, or dancing skills, so practice is the key to finding information in the Bible. In learning skills, everyone starts at the beginning. There

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The Oro Experience

Grant R. Aldridge
New Zealand

AS I WRITE, it's been three months since we, as members of a work team under the auspices of the Advent Christian Mission of New Zealand, returned home from three weeks at Oro Bible College in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines.

For seven members of our 15-member team, this was the first time that they had taken part in such a project. Four others had been to Oro once before. And for the remaining four members of the team this was the third time we have been there.

You might say that going to Oro is infectious, and in some ways it is. From a personal standpoint I offered my services to go, not because I am a professional tradesperson although I have had some experience in building. On any project we have undertaken, carriers of wood, cement, water, and nails have been needed so that the skilled workers could do the work more efficiently and quickly. It was in this capacity that I have gone to the Philippines.

After our first term, our original team had opportunity to share our experiences with members of our association of churches. I think our enthusiasm rubbed off on others so that when the time came for the second trip to be organized, several more were ready to go.

Opportunities to serve

Again, the work we were involved in kept us busy during the week. But on two Sundays we were able to go out to various Advent Christian churches to speak to the congregations there. God gave us the privilege of serving in a variety of ways. One of the team was asked to dedicate six infants in a service at Lumbia and dedicate the church building at Banilad, Cebu, the next weekend. These as well as speaking at services were humbling experiences. During our third trip we had even greater opportunity to share with the congregations through cooking classes and financial seminars as well as through speaking appointments and the project construction work itself.

Filipinos are such a loving, gracious, friendly people that it is indeed a privilege to serve our Lord by serving them and sharing with them.

Filipinos are such a loving, gracious, friendly people that it is indeed a privilege to serve our Lord by serving them and sharing with them. Even so, as a member of such a team it's essential to know the Lord's leading and to have the support of your family and church as you go out. On the first two trips my son and I were certain of this as my wife, two daughters, and second son prayed for us before and during our time away. Our church fellowships also contributed to our "success" through financial and prayer support.

This latest trip, however, was a little different for me. My wife had expressed the wish to go with the second team but was concerned that she would not be able to cope with the heat. And my eldest daughter, although desiring to go, was prevented by personal circumstances. In August '93, our church held a Mission Sunday especially promoting the Oro

Team Project and my wife felt compelled to go as did my eldest daughter. This meant that four of us from one family (my eldest son went again too) had the privilege of serving the Lord on the same project. We also knew that we had the support of our other son, daughter, and son-in-law whom we had left at home.

Being able to do things together in this way as a family gave an added dimension. We were able to support each other which helped us at specific times, although I must add that team members are always there ready to support each other throughout the time away.

God will provide. Throughout our time away our gracious heavenly Father kept us from harm both while building and during other activities. As answers to prayer, my wife was able to cope with the heat and others who had expressed some reservations prior to going were all given the ability to cope with each situation.

The most lasting memories of our times in the Philippines will be those of the O.B.C. students and staff. Meeting and getting to know these folks has been a blessing to us beyond our telling. As a family we are able to talk about these loved ones and know something of what each of us is feeling. This is a bonus that we did not expect. Even as I write, we have shared memories of things and people we experienced together. God is truly great and wonderful.

Have you ever considered short-term mission service? You may have, just as several of us "Kiwis" have had, reservations about such a venture. But let me assure you that if you have the opportunity to serve in a similar team situation and the Lord is leading you, then be obedient and in faith accept the call. God will richly bless you. ❑

Grant Aldridge and his family are members of the Kaurilands Church of Christ (Life and Advent) Auckland, New Zealand. He is a deputy principal of a school. Janice, his wife, is the principal nurse of a large rest home complex administered by the Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand while his daughter is a registered accountant and his son is a builder.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

December

1 Praise God for four new Advent Christian missionary candidates-under-appointment for India: **Tim and Ruth Fox**, and **Bill and Cynthia Jewell**.

2 Pray that God will oversee the process as both couples apply for the necessary visas to begin their work in India next month.

3 Praise God for the appointment of **Rev. George Teshera** as Asia/Pacific Area Director for Advent Christian missions.

4 Pray that God will give **Rev. Teshera** wisdom and understanding as he works with Advent Christian missionaries and national conference leaders.

5 Praise God for the appointment of **Rev. Warren Prestidge**, from the Conditional Immortality Fellowship of New Zealand, as the new director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

6 Pray that the Lord's wisdom and strength will be with **Rev. Prestidge** as he prepares to assume his responsibilities at Oro Bible College early in 1995.

7 Praise God for the students studying for Christian ministry at the **India School of Evangelism**.

8 Pray that God will richly bless the work of **Barbara White, Beryl Joy Hollis**, and **Marion Damon** as they enter their last nine months of ministry in India.

9 Praise God for the lives being touched for Jesus Christ through Advent Christian mission work in Malaysia.

10 Pray that God will give strength and courage to Advent Christian national missionaries in Malaysia as they face the powerful influence of Islam in that country.

11 Praise God for the forty years of effective ministry and service of the **Philippine Advent Christian Confer-**

ence.

12 Pray for **David Vignali** as he carries out a variety of responsibilities with Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

13 Praise God for new Advent Christian mission fields that will be opened in **Honduras** and **New Zealand.**

14 Pray that God will raise up a Spanish-speaking missionary couple for **Honduras.**

15 Pray that God will provide the right missionary candidates for Advent Christian work in **New Zealand.**

16 Pray that God will guide **Margaret Helms** as she provides leadership for the new Advent Christian congregation in Ono Newtown, Japan.

17 Praise God for a **renewed interest** in mission service among Advent Christians.

18 Pray that the Lord will provide rest and renewal for **Steven and Ann Lay** while they're home on furlough.

19 Praise God for the strong Christian commitment of Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in **Japan.**

20 Pray that God will give **Karen Rigney** wisdom and understanding in her Japanese language studies.

21 Praise God for the ministry of **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

22 Pray for **Aloysius and Grace Okon** as they work to plant an Advent Christian congregation in the African-American community in Charlotte.

23 Praise God for the dedicated service that **your pastor and his family** have provided for your congregation during 1994.

24 Pray that God will strengthen and encourage **your pastor** in the face of the many demands of ministry.

25 Praise God for his **greatest gift of all:** the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

26 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they serve the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

27 Praise God for committed Christian students studying at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico.

28 Pray for Advent Christians and Christians from all denominations who face the struggle of a continuing civil war in **Liberia.**

29 Praise God that **many lives** were touched for Jesus Christ around the world in 1994.

30 Pray that the Lord will richly bless the work of Advent Christian pastors in **Nigeria.**

31 As we prepare to celebrate a new year, pray that God's **kingdom work** will expand as the gospel is proclaimed throughout the world.

Graciousness continued from page 10

wife Kathleen.

• One of Tom's oldest friends in the church and his wife took me on a trip to the ocean for a couple of days. While there I got to see the cranberry bogs on the Washington coast for the first time. Another trip given to me by long-standing friends was near Mt. Rainier on a train pulled by the old-fashioned way of steam locomotion.

• A large demonstration of love for Tom came in the form of a remodeling job. We had found some dry rot in our basement bathroom. The men from the West Valley congregation donated almost 230 hours of labor to repair and restore the bathroom. It's lovely. Again God provided for me.

• Another dear friend supplied yard work—something I personally can't do, while another made needed repairs on a fence.

• Another friend, knowing that our daughter Jamie was close to graduating from college, supplied most of a quarter's tuition.

God's promises (which are many) and the kind words in appreciation of Tom are a source of immense comfort and are at the top of the list. ❑

Gertrude Isaac is active at the Seattle Advent Christian Church and wrote this article for the 1994 WHFMS Program Kit.

Answer-Book continued from page 11

is always the Table of Contents if you get stuck.

The children learned to find references more quickly by placing a marker between the Old and New Testament. I was amazed when some of the children could find many references in twenty to twenty-five seconds.

One variation we used was the "Open Question" to the audience, without point value. It was used when contestants didn't know the answer, or at the discretion of the Game Master, if the audience became restless. When you found the answer, you stood to be recognized. On open questions, the room erupted in excitement.

Finalists at our youth camp were Dorothy Barker of Princeton; Joey Durer of Calais, Maine; and Luke Middleton of Massena, New York. The champion was Luke Middleton, son of Pastor and Mrs. George Middleton. He received a copy of Eugene Peterson's New Testament paraphrase, *The Message*, a Big Lake T-shirt, a piece of jewelry, and a Burger King crown.

It would be interesting to use this tool, or parts of it, in a Sunday school class, as a program for an all-church supper, in VBS, or as a contest adults vs. youth or Sunday school teachers vs. students. The adults better practice! ❑

Mary Jane Stone is a retired schoolteacher and is active at Christ Chapel (A.C.) in Raymond, Maine.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

The future announces itself from afar. But most people are not listening. The noisy clatter of the present drowns out the tentative sounds of things to come. The sound of the new does not fit old perceptual patterns and goes unnoticed by most people.

—*John Gardner*

Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.

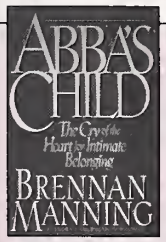
—*Goethe*

The great malady of the twentieth century, implicated in all of our troubles and affecting us individually and socially, is a "loss of soul." When soul is neglected, it doesn't just go away; it appears symptomatically in obsessions, addictions, violence and loss of meaning. Our temptation is to isolate these symptoms or to try to eradicate them one by one; but the root problem is that we have lost our wisdom of the soul, even our interest in it.

—*Thomas Moore in* Care of the Soul

Only Jesus Christ, who bids us to follow him, knows the journey's end. But we know that it will be a road of boundless mercy.

—*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*



In other words. . .

Discipleship is not about being right or being perfect or being efficient. It's all about the way we live with each other. In every encounter we either give life or we drain it. There is no neutral exchange. We enhance human dignity, or we diminish it. The success or failure of a given day is measured by the quality of our interest and compassion towards those around us.

We define ourselves by our response to human need. The question is not how we feel about our neighbor but what we have done for him or her. We reveal our heart in the way we listen to a child, speak to the person who delivers the mail, bear an injury, and share our resources with the indigent.

—*Brennon Manning in* Abba's Child

We all tend to prescribe the answers to our prayers. We think that God can come in only one way. But Scripture teaches us that God sometimes answers our prayers by allowing things to become much worse before they become better. He may sometimes do the opposite of what we anticipate. . . Yet it is a fundamental principle in the life and walk of faith that we must always be prepared for the unexpected when we are dealing with God.

—*D. Martyn Lloyd Jones*

Seated next to Hubert Humphrey's wife at the late senator's funeral—Richard Nixon, a long-time political adversary and a man disgraced by Watergate. He occupied the seat of honor at Humphrey's request.

Three days before he died, Jesse Jackson visited the former Vice-president in the hospital. He told Jackson that he had just called Nixon. Knowing their past relationship, the fellow Democrat asked "Why?"

"From this vantage point, with the sun setting on my life," he replied, "all of the speeches, the political conventions, the crowds, and the great fights are behind me. At a time like this, your are forced to. . . grapple with that which is really important. And what I have concluded about life is that when all is said and done, we must forgive each other, redeem each other, and move on."

—*John Maxwell in* Be a People Person

Anyone who believes deeply is a potential martyr, for belief always entails a bedrock principle that will not yield.

—*Stephen Carter*

Human beings are indeed depraved. We have all strayed from the way of truth and righteousness. Left to our own designs, nothing can get us back on the right path. Only God's grace can rescue us. We are all in the same condition. But this means that educated people are in no better position than the uneducated. Theologians have no better access to God than do farmers and waitresses. We all desperately need God's mercy. And we need other Christians, to encourage and admonish and nurture each other in our attempts to respond appropriately to God's sovereign grace.

—*Richard Mouw*

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EUGENE PETERSON

"I'm always kinda taken aback when someone says to me, 'No one else is saying this.' It seems so obvious to me. It's written all over the pages of church history. It's written all over the pages of the Bible. Why does this sound so different?"

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Bill O'Connor explores how the phrase "I am with you" is used in the Bible and suggests that Jesus promises to be with us no matter what the situation or circumstance.

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This issue highlights the Sermon on the Mount from Eugene Peterson's fresh new paraphrase of the New Testament.

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR

Who Has the Final Word?

EVERY ELECTION brings good news and bad news. The good news is that we're finally rid of all those childish campaign ads. There's nothing more irritating than having a good 49er football game disrupted by someone trying to convince me their opponent and his policies will mark a return to the dark ages.

The bad news comes during the weeks following the election when the politicians, media celebrities, and spin-doctors offer a menu of interpretations of what we, the voters, did. Some of their comments are perceptive. But most are best forgotten. Was last month's election significant? Yes, it was. As columnist William Safire put it, what happened last month "was caused by the majority's growing belief that government is growing too big, intrusive, and wasteful of tax dollars at all levels." Will it make a huge difference in how the United States government does its work and its people order their daily lives? Probably not as much as we like to think it would unless our new representatives and senators are willing to give up a significant portion of their power and pursue a more focused, limited government.

> Since its beginning, the Christian faith has sought to encourage a realistic understanding of politics and public life.

The political illusion

Why is all this important to evangelical Christians in our democracy? It's not only because of increased involvement by politically conservative Christians during the last twenty years, a trend that has both positive and negative effects in church and society. It's also because since its beginning, the Christian faith has sought to encourage a realistic understanding of politics and public life. Jesus never encouraged Christians to withdraw from society. Instead he challenged us to be realists. Public life is important and an appropriate place for Christians to serve.

But it's not the essence of life. For Christians, our ultimate hope rests not in the election of our favorite politician. Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot do not have the final word. Your political party does not have the final word. Jesus does. And our hopes will not be fully realized until he returns. It's easy to become caught in what the late French sociologist Jacques Ellul termed "the political illusion," the unconscious belief that all of life revolves around politics and government. We succumb to the political illusion when we tie the advancement of God's work to the victory or defeat of our candidates or our political party. We become victim to the political illusion when we accept and endorse lying and slander as legitimate means of political advertising, debate, and discourse.

Christian realism

Please don't misunderstand. Christian involvement in public life is vital to the health of our society. Some Christians (including until recently, many evangelicals) took a hands-off attitude toward government, law, politics, the media, and other professions that shape our society. And as we look back at the last sixty years in the United States, most of us realize that attitude played a major role in the growth of secularism in our society. When Christians withdraw from public life—from law, government, the arts, the media—the consequence is that those areas of public life become devoid of significant Christian influence.

The Christian faith rejects both political abstinence and the political illusion in favor of a realistic approach. As Christians, we should have a healthy skepticism about what the political pro-

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Is Jesus Only for EMERGENCIES?

J. Ronald Schoolcraft
Jacksonville, Fla.

LAST YEAR, a little girl and her family had admired an elaborate manger scene in a neighbor's yard throughout the Christmas season. One day, after the first of the new year, they passed the house and it was gone. The little girl remarked to her parents, "They have put the Lord Jesus away for another year!"

I thought to myself, "This is how many folks think of the relationship they have with the Lord Jesus today." When catastrophe strikes, when they have gone as far as human wisdom will allow, or when their family and friends can render no assistance, then they rush to church and say to the pastor, "Pray for us!" Drag out the old dust-covered Bible that has not been read since Grandmother visited the last time, wipe it off, and begin to search for some comfort and hope. If such is found they will lay the blessed old Book away until the next emergency arises. Just like you would lay up your sewing kit until the next rip comes.

I'm not saying that Jesus will not respond to the pleas of those who follow him afar off. Contrite surrender always brings assistance. I am saying, however, that it is dangerous to be without the daily companionship of the "one who sticks closer than a brother." How many people have you known whose lives were snuffed out in an automobile accident, an explosion, or some freak accident, without the opportunity to pray, seek the forgiveness of God, and go with the assurance of a home in the eternal kingdom when Jesus comes again?

The only one

There's a beautiful chorus which offers something we should never forget:

"Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus;
He's a friend who always cares and understands.
Standing somewhere in the shadows you will find him,
And you'll know him by the nailprints in his hand!"

I like the assurance which John gives when he says, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2).

Jesus Christ is the only one who can forgive your sins, heal your brokenness, and be your ever present help in times of need. He longs to be your constant companion rather than an emergency measure! I do not doubt the willingness and ability of my Christ to forgive the vilest sinner, no matter how far they have strayed from him. However, the thought that comes to me is: when the hour of trial comes, will I have the mental faculties to call upon him?

Every person who hopes to be saved when Jesus returns to this earth should commit this statement by Peter to memory, and never forget it: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

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THE NEW TESTAMENT IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

EUGENE H. PETERSON

The MESSAGE

The Sermon on the Mount
from Eugene Peterson's
New Paraphrase of the New Testament

WHEN JESUS saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

"You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

"You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

"Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, *I* do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

Salt and light

"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

"Don't suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God's Law or the Prophets. I'm not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God's Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God's Law will be alive and working.

"Trivialize even the smallest item in God's Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won't know the first thing about entering the kingdom.

Murder

You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill.

"This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.

"Or say you're out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you're likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won't get out without a stiff fine.

Adultery and divorce

"You know the next commandment pretty well, too: 'Don't go to bed with another's spouse.' But don't think you've preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your *heart* can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your *body*. Those leering looks you think nobody notices—they also corrupt.

"Let's not pretend this is easier than it really is. If you want to live a morally pure life, here's what you have to do: You have to blind your right eye the moment you catch it in a lustful leer. You have to choose to live one-eyed or else be dumped on a moral trash pile. And you have to chop off your right hand the moment you notice it raised threateningly. Better a bloody stump than your entire being discarded for good in the dump.

"Remember the Scripture that says, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him do it legally, giving her divorce papers and her legal rights?' Too many of you are using that as a cover for selfishness and whim, pretending to be righteous just because you are 'legal.' Please, no more pretending. If you divorce your wife, you're responsible for making her an adulteress (unless she has already made herself that by sexual promiscuity). And if you marry such a divorced adulteress, you're auto- matically an adulterer yourself. You can't use legal cover to mask a moral failure.

Empty promises

"And don't say anything you don't mean. This counsel is embedded deep in our traditions. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk, saying, 'I'll pray for you,' and never doing it, or saying, 'God be with you,' and not meaning it. You don't make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. In making your

"The world is full of **SO-CALLED** prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling **TECHNIQUES** for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that **NONSENSE**. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need."

"Don't be **FLIP** with the sacred. Banter and silliness give no honor to God. Don't reduce holy **MYSTERIES** to slogans. In trying to be relevant, you're only being cute and inviting sacrilege."

speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say 'yes' and 'no.' When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong.

Love your enemies

"Here's another old saying that deserves a second look: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' Is that going to get us anywhere? Here's what I propose: 'Don't hit back at all.' If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, gift wrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit for tat stuff. Live generously.

"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

"In a word, what I'm saying is, *Grow up*. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.

The world is not a stage

"Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding.

"When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure—'playactors' I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

Pray with simplicity

"And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

'Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best—
as above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.
You're in charge!
You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty!
Yes. Yes. Yes.'

"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

"When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won't make you a saint. If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing; he'll reward you well.

A life of God-worship

"Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

"Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!

"You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't

worship God and money both.

"If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

"Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things but you know both God and the way he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

A simple guide for behavior

"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, 'Let me wash your face for you,' when your own face is distorted by contempt? It's this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor.

"Don't be flip with the sacred. Banter and silliness give no honor to God. Don't reduce holy mysteries to slogans. In trying to be relevant, you're only being cute and inviting sacrilege.

"Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?

"Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for *them*. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get.

"I can see it now—at the Final Judgment **THOUSANDS** strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the **MESSAGE**, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was **USE** me to make yourselves important."

Being and doing

"Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.

"Be wary of false preachers who smile a lot, dripping with practiced sincerity. Chances are they are out to rip you off some way or other. Don't be impressed with charisma; look for character. Who preachers *are* is the main thing, not what they say. A genuine leader will never exploit your emotions or your pocketbook. These diseased trees with their bad apples are going to be chopped down and burned.

"Knowing the correct password—saying 'Master, Master,' for instance—isn't going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—*doing* what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here.

"These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit-but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

"But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the

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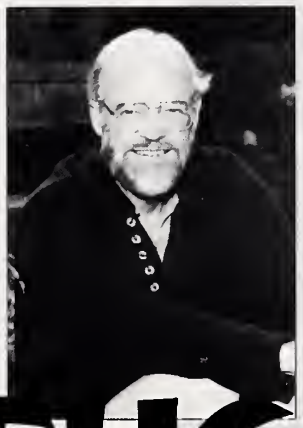
The Witness Talks With EUGENE PETERSON



EUGENE PETERSON is known not only for his fresh new pharaphrase of Scripture, but for his unique challenge to pastors and congregations to recover prayer and comtemplation as the heart of Christian living and ministry. Clayton Blackstone interviewed Rev. Peterson last January at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C., and asked him about the work of the church, the nature of ministry, and his work in paraphrasing the New Testament.

Dr. Peterson, *Christianity Today* once kindly referred to you as an 'Evangelical Monk.' Please highlight the story of your journey from an "out-every-night" church planter to one who strives now to live life at a more measured pace with a sharpened focus on contemplative spirituality.

I think my desire for a contemplative life—my attraction to a life of prayer, a life that was centered and leisurely in God—went back much earlier. In fact, I was living that way for the most part. I was attracted to the contemplative traditions and acquired a sense of "at-homeness" in that whole world. But becoming a pastor interrupted that. I was planting a new church and didn't know how to be a pastor. I was anxious and didn't want to fail so I did what we often do when we're unsure of ourselves—work twice as hard, three times as hard, all the time feeling we're behind. I had no confidence in what I was as a pastor. After a couple years of doing that, I suddenly realized I'd given up the best part of my life. I was destroying the very conditions that made me want to be a pastor. At this point I was beginning to wake up, and I tried to change, but I still didn't know how to be a pastor. I was trying desperately to make sure this church didn't fail. Of course, all the pastors I knew were doing the same thing. This is the way you did it. But I realized I was destroying the only thing that had any integrity or worth to it. Because I couldn't change, I quit.

I just went to my church board and quit. "I came to be your pastor, and I'm not your pastor, and I can't change, so it makes no sense to stay here. I'm ruining my life, and I'm ruining yours," I said. "Well, what do you want to do?" they asked. "Well, I want to pray. I want to study Scripture. I want to be with you, and have time to listen to you." And they said, "Well, why don't you do it? I said, "Because I have to run this church!" And they said, "Let us run the church." "But you don't know how," I responded. "Well, we'll learn. Since you don't know how to be a pastor, we'll let you learn how to be a pastor. Just let us learn how to run the church." And so, it was a wonderful evening. "To start with, if we're going to run the church, we don't want you at any more meetings. We'll do it." At that time, I was out every night. We were building a church. They just kicked me out of the process, out of the architectural things, and the fund-raising things.

That was the start. Although actually for me, I wasn't starting from the beginning. I was resuming the life I had left. I knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't know how to do it as a pastor. I started trying to learn how the pastoral vocation could actually be a spiritual vocation. The learning was a mutual thing. I wasn't doing it by myself. I had a congregation discovering how to be the church.

You can't do this by yourself. You've got to have a congregation that's going to be participating as I did. They truly did have to learn how to be the church. And I had to learn how to be the pastor. We were both starting off.

Two or three weeks after this night when the heavens opened and the dove descended there was an important stewardship and financial meeting, and I was not doing anything. We were building a church, and there wasn't a lot of money, or very many people. I tried a book, and couldn't read. I was restless, kind of pacing back and forth, and I thought, "Well, I'll just go." I lived about a half mile away from the church, so it took me about ten minutes to walk the distance. I slid into this meeting when it was about half over. They had been meeting for about 40 or 50 minutes, eight or ten of them were sitting around in a circle. I sat down outside the circle and the chairperson said, "What are you here for?" "Well, I didn't have anything to do, and I've just come to support you. I just wanted you to know that I was on your side." He said, "You don't trust us, do you?" "Well, I guess I don't, but I'll try." And I left. I never went back. That was it.

What did you start doing differently? How did your days look different in your Daytimer?

Well, I'm not sure that would look a great deal different. It was the anxiety level that diminished. I'm not sure a time schedule would show anything. The crowdedness, the kind of obsessiveness to always be doing something began to disappear. My mornings were basically in my study reading and praying. My afternoons were basically in visitation, my evenings in meetings. I wiped out the meetings and I didn't visit the same way anymore. My visitation previously during that time was recruitment-driven. I wanted to get people to join the church, or I wanted to get them to work. Now my visitation changed. I didn't do that anymore. I visited people who needed visiting. So I didn't visit as much. I slowed down. I used to spend a half an hour with somebody because I had something to do, or to say. Now I'd spend two hours, because I didn't have anything to say. I could listen to them. My whole life became more leisurely, more contemplative. I was being prayerful and attentive to what was going on with these people, rather than trying to get them to do something that would make me successful. I can't take all the credit for that, I had help. These people were saying to me, "We want you to do this. We want a pastor."

How did the change in your life, in the way that you were doing pastoring, affect the way your congregation did church?

It had a lot of effects. Not everyone liked the change. There were people who left; people who went down the street to a church where the pastor did what they thought a pastor ought to do. Everybody doesn't think this way is a wonderful thing, but a surprising number did.

It's amazing to me as I look back, once they realized what I was doing, how much people appreciated having a pastor. Someone who wasn't always trying to recruit them to do something.

I realized many of these folks were coming into the church having been badgered and bullied by pastors all their lives. Now they were coming into a safe harbor. I let them alone. I let them be themselves. And they were very appreciative of it.

Then they started looking at church in a different way. Gradually, instead of seeing the church as a place that had programs for them to keep them entertained or busy, they found it to be a place for worship. Worship became the most important thing in the life of most of these people. It's amazing: Here's the central thing that the church does, but in peoples' awareness of priorities, it's very peripheral in the American church.

I told them, "The only time I want to see you is 11:00 on Sunday, unless you want to see me for something." So the church became a place for quietness, for worship, for attentiveness. I wasn't telling them to do it, but my approach created an atmosphere in which they could do it. Things slowly changed. But after 25 years, people caught on.

It seems as though people may expect contemplativeness of their spiritual leader, but are not quite sure how it affects them or that they can do it. What changes did you notice, a dad on the corporate fast-track, or the single mom trying to be mom and dad and supporter of the family?

Well, Clayton, I'm not sure I can speak to that. Many people didn't change. I don't want to give the sense that this was all transforming. But I think overall there was a shift in the way people thought about their lives with God. That it's not a performance, that they're not having to do things. They recovered a sense of dignity in their lives before God. As long as there's a performance or a programmatic orientation, you're always aware of what you haven't done. When you shift that over into something more worshipful, you don't have that maddening sense that you've got to do more. There is a relaxation. People in my congregation had a sense that I had all the time in the world for them. They didn't have to apologize about walking in on me or calling me up. Not many places in their lives did they have that. I would often hear

Being a Christian, being a community, being a person, is a complex process. It's done in **RELATIONSHIP.** If you don't have the time to develop relationships you almost guarantee that you're going to have an infantile or adolescent spirituality.

people say, "This is the only place in my life where I know who I am." So in varying degrees, this affects other parts of their lives.

So the church became an oasis.

I suppose there's a certain sense of that, although I never had the feeling that it was a place of escapism, because people would be greatly energized in that setting. They would go out, and be involved in mission and evangelism on their own. But I think I also need to say, in the context of what we're talking about , that this is not a way to grow a large church. We were not large. We were small. And every church in town grew faster than we did. So if that's your criteria of what makes a church authentic, this is not the way to do it.

The more we **PROFESSIONALIZE** the church, the more we **WEAKEN** the church.

Define small.

Well, for most of the thirty years I was there, we ran between 150 and 250. When I left it was about 450, but that happened just in the last couple of years. There was a housing increase. Most of my time I was the pastor of a church between 200 and 250 people—the only pastor.

In *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, you beg pastors to make a vow of stability, arguing that pastorates of fifteen, twenty years or longer ought to be the norm rather than the exception. That flies in the face of the norm. Why do you believe such stability is important to the developing of a community of faith?

Because being a Christian, being a community, being a person, is a complex process. It's done in relationship. If you don't have the time to develop relationships you almost guarantee that you're going to have an infantile or adolescent spirituality. Maturity requires patience and time. All the deep relationships we have require time—a parent and child, a husband and wife, friends.

I'm not dogmatic about this longevity stuff, because there are exceptions. But we're talking about the norm, what people expect to do. I think it makes a lot of sense for the congregation, but I guess my primary sense is what it does to the pastor. If you leave every 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 years, you don't have to grow. You have to develop your own spirituality beyond the superficial. Most of us can get by just on dumb luck for three or four years. Then if we change, we just keep doing the same thing over and over again. It's easy to be married for five years, then you start having to grow up. I think it's the same thing with a new pastor. It's easy to be a pastor for four or five years, but then you have to start finding out something about a holy life. Your initial enthusiasm and gifts can carry you so far. If you look at the church of America, there's not much maturity. There's a lot of action, a lot of ideas, and a lot of energy, but not much maturity.

What can a congregation do to increase the pastor's shelf-life?

I started writing an open letter to American Christians several months ago, but I never did get it finished. I probably couldn't publish it anyway. But what congregations can do is what that group of people did for me. "Get out of here. We don't want you. Stay out of our meetings. Trust us." Lock your pastor in his study for four hours a day. Tell him, "We don't want you. We don't want you at our picnics or softball games. We want you praying. We want you studying." That's what I think they should do.

You're really a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Most challenge us to be the visionary, the one who casts the dream for the church, upfront cheerleader. Contrast what you're saying with what's being told to the American pastor today.

I think behind all that stuff is a pretty thorough contempt for the laity. When we start talking about vision and leadership, we're really saying, "These poor Christians in our congregations don't know anything, and unless I'm there to tell them, unless I do this, nothing will happen." It betrays a contempt for the laity and a contempt for the Holy Spirit. And so we professionalize the church and the more we professionalize the church, the more we weaken the church. No matter how big your building is, no matter how many people you have in there, you're just weakening the church constantly. The laity are just as good at being Christian as pastors. And they're just as good at running a church as the pastor is. But they're going to do it on their terms. They're not going to have as much ego invested in it. A lot of things won't get done.

I feel pretty strongly about this. Protestants talk about how the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church ruined the church, but we're doing the same thing. This is a new clericalism. We don't control people now by access to the sacraments the way those clergy did, but we do it now in other ways, just as controlling, just as manipulating. This high-visibility leader that the church is cultivating these days is doing the same thing to the church as the late-middle ages did. The recovery in the leadership of the church is going to come with the revival of the laity, just as the Reformation was the recovery of the laity. We're not going to change the American church by sending the pastors to seminars. We're going to do it by getting them to go back to their studies, back to their pulpits, and back to their listening posts. It's a puzzle to me, Clayton. This seems so obvious to me. It's written all over the pages of church history. It's written all over the pages of the Bible. Why does this sound different? I'm always kind of taken aback when someone says to me, "No one else is saying this." It's kind of odd, isn't it?

Tell us about the inception and the birth of *The Message*.

Well, like most inceptions, I didn't know it was happening when it happened. About ten or twelve years ago, I taught a class on Galatians—an adult Bible class in the basement of our church. I started the class because I was angry. Everyone seemed so comfortable, and so security-oriented, concerned about their pension plans and their security systems. I just got angry about it, and I thought, "Well, I'll teach them Galatians." I started teaching but they were just going to sleep on me. It was bad. I went home one day and said to my wife Jan, "They're not getting anything. I'm going to teach them Greek. If they could read this in Greek, they'd get it. They would see how, the energy, and the revolutionary way in which this is done."

And Jan said, "Yea, that'll really get them excited."

I would clear the place out pretty fast. So I started writing out the way it sounds to me in Greek. Every week I'd bring in a page of paraphrase. They got excited. I noticed it first when I cleaned up afterwards—their coffee cups were still half-full of cold coffee. They'd gotten so excited, so interested in the text, that they'd forgotten their coffee. That's when I realized I had them. I knew something was going on. We had a great year doing Galatians. Later on, the material found its way into a book called *Traveling Light*, and the paraphrases are included in the book.

About three years ago, an editor from NavPress called me and said, "I've been carrying around this paraphrase in my coat for years, reading it to everybody I could. I'm getting tired of Galatians. Why don't you try the whole New Testament?" My first reaction was, "I couldn't do that." Paul is pretty easy, he's a "paraphrasable" writer. But I knew I couldn't do the Gospels. But we talked about it, and I finally agreed to do ten chapters of Matthew, and see what I thought. I knew the early chapters were no good. It was plodding, dull, pedestrian stuff. Then I got to the Sermon on the Mount. Something kicked in. All of a sudden, I started doing it a different way. And by the time I completed the Sermon on the Mount I realized I was doing something I didn't know I could do.

The editor looked at those ten chapters and he was pleased and pretty excited. He wanted me to tackle the entire New Testament. It took me a year to do Galatians. I suspected it was going to take ten years of my life. I told him I couldn't do it.

I realized that I could not write and be a pastor at the same time. I was getting close to sixty years old. There were a lot of things I still wanted to write, and this seemed to be my unfolding ministry. After a long time of prayer and conversation and counsel, I made the decision to resign. A seminary invited me to be a writer-in-residence for a year, and this invitation came back. I thought, "I've got time. I can do this." So that's what I did.

Describe what makes your contribution to the Bible market different than some of the new recent translations or paraphrases like those of J.B. Phillips and Ken Taylor.

Well, the person I'm most pleased to be compared with is J.B. Phillips. And in some ways it's no different. Phillips influenced me greatly when I was a teenager. And I think of all the things that have been done, it's probably the one that I feel most akin to. By the way, when I did this, I didn't read anything else. I didn't read any translations or any paraphrases. I just worked with my Greek text.

When you compare me to Phillips, I'm pleased. As far as I know, Phillips and I are the only pastors who have ever done this. All the other translations are done by committee and are scholars who bring scholarly qualifications to the work. Looking at the text through the eyes of a pastor gives the work a distinct flavor.

If there is anything that gives me a unique qualification, it is my immersion in the parish. Ken Taylor is the other popular single person translator, but he was an editor. There is a distinctive quality to his work also. This is 1994—language changes fast. The Phillips' translation is 50 years old. Taylor's is 35, although he does make several revisions. I never look at this as being a study Bible. I think a study Bible needs to be a committee Bible. My editors call this a reading Bible. When the Bible was written, it was written in street language—ordinary language. People did not need a commentary to read it. They didn't study it, they read it. I hope for people to "get it" the first time through.

If you were shipwrecked and could salvage only a page or two of *The Message*, which pages would that be, and why?

I think it would be the Sermon on the Mount, simply because things started happening when I was writing there. That is when I realized that, yes, I should be doing this.

At the beginning of the decade, Bill Moyers suggested that the subject of spirituality would be the hot topic as we race toward the end of another millennium. What do you think accounts for the hunger?

I think there are cultural things that account for the widespread interest in spirituality. We have come to the end of an era in terms of technology, education, the whole "enlightenment" business. We really believed that if we got people educated, things would be better. If we gave people a higher standard of living, and gave them the right tools, they would do something wonderful with it. Both things have turned out to be lies.

We have gotten this incredibly

I think we are at the **END OF AN ERA** that started with the enlightenment of rationalism and technology.

sophisticated educational system, and everybody has all of the technological tools, and appliances and cars, but their lives are miserable. So, I think, for North America, we have been successful in what we set out to do—and people's lives are worse. There is a seeping realization that another degree isn't going to do it. Another car isn't going to do it. So what's left? God, or some substitute for God. There is nothing particularly Christian in all this spirituality interest. There is a lot of idolatry but at least people know that reading another book, getting another degree, or getting enough money so they can buy things, just doesn't make things better. I think we are at the end of an era that started with the enlightenment of rationalism and technology.

The surprising thing to me is that there are still so many people around that still operate on rationalist, technological principles. The church is the last to catch on to this because people are still thinking that technological solutions are going to revive the church, that educational solutions are going to revive the church.

Recently you have observed that many within the household of faith are tired of being told about God—tired of being programmed. Having identified the disease, please suggest some ways for us to treat the illness.

There is nothing novel about what I have to say. We need to learn a life of prayer, to acquire a life of contemplation. This is not just for people who are temperamentally quiet, this means everybody. The way of prayer, of contemplation, of worship, is wisdom. We can learn this regardless of our temperaments or conditions. But, God is the one with whom we are to deal. We have to learn how to listen to him, how to respond to him. And if we don't do that, nothing we do is going to end up amounting to much.

I don't have anything novel to say—I just call people to worship. I teach them how to pray. I pray with them. This has always been at the center of our Gospel, but we have not always stayed in that center. We have wondered off and done a lot of other things. Of course, everything is easier, so we think we will take a short cut and do them. It will never be the popular way, but we've got to reacquire a sense of how the Gospel works through yeast and mustard seed kinds of things.

There is nothing **NOVEL** about what I have to say. We need to learn a life of prayer, to acquire a life of **CONTEMPLATION**. This is not just for people who are temperamentally quiet, this means **EVERYBODY**.

The Message from page 8

sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards."

When Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this. It was apparent that he was living everything he was saying—quite a contrast to their religion teachers! This was the best teaching they had ever heard. ❑

Eugene Peterson is professor of spiritual theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has written 13 books including A Long Obedience in the Same Direction, *and is a contributing editor to* Leadership Journal. *He was the founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland, where he served for 29 years. Eugene and his wife, Jan, have three grown children. This excerpt of Matthew 5-7 is from* The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English, *copyright ©1993 by Eugene Peterson and used by permission of Navpress, P.O. Box 35001, Colorado Springs, Colo. 80935.*

THE MESSAGE OF HOPE

Communicating the Message of Hope

Eugene Peterson's *The Message* is a fresh new paraphrase designed to communicate the truth of the New Testament in a way that people with little or no Christian background can grasp and understand. It's written in contemporary language that captures the earthy, real-world relevance of the original New Testament Greek.

The publisher has designed an abbreviated version entitled *The Message of Hope* and it's designed to communicate the good news of God's love to common, everyday people. The booklet includes the Gospel of Mark, the first eight chapters of Romans and several key chapters from the New Testament and Psalms that clearly communicate the gospel in non-religious, easy-to-understand English.

The Message of Hope is an excellent evangelism tool for individuals and congregations, just the right thing to give to a friend, relative, or associate to spark their interest in the Christian faith. It comes in cartons of 50 booklets and each carton costs $20.00. If your church is looking for a good tool to communicate God's love to people with whom you come in contact, call Millie Griswold at Venture Bookstore: (800)676-0694. She will be happy to give you more information.

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go"
"I will never leave you nor forsake you"

NOW God is With Us!

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand"

Bill O'Connor
Newberg, Ore.

WE ALL LOVE the message of Christmas, the story of the incarnation; we delight in hearing that God came down to be one of us, to live among us in human flesh. Our hearts are filled with rejoicing when we hear the ancient words of prophecy as quoted by the angel Gabriel: *The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him "Immanuel"—which means, "God with us"* (Matthew 1:23). But, as much as we love the story, and the truth which it presents, we often miss the reality of it at times other than the Christmas season.

The message of Christmas was and is "God with us." We remember that he came to the manger; we forget that he is still present. When faced with some trouble or difficulty, we are too quick to ask, "God, where did you go?" When life presses in on us, we ask, "What happened to you when I needed you?" Beset by problems, we say to God, "Where were you when things were going wrong?"

Such questions do not make us unique, however, for God's people, who are notorious for forgetting truth in the middle of tests and trials, have been asking the same questions for centuries. It was questions such as these that motivated Francis Schaeffer to name God, "The God Who is There." That phrase has an eternal quality to it, like God himself. It has a ring of permanence about it which we must not forget. God has always made it a habit to stand with his people and to manifest his power on their behalf, and his habit has not changed.

The simple phrase, "I will be with you" appears eight times in the *New International Version* of the Bible. Two times God says, "I will not leave you. The words "I am with you" are spoken twenty-one times. Let's follow a few of those promises through the pages of Scripture.

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go," said God to Jacob as he revealed himself at Bethel, *"and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you"* (Genesis 28:15). God kept that promise through all the years that followed, though Jacob frequently forgot to honor his vows to the Lord. God was faithful even when Jacob was not. And he has not changed; God is still faithful.

When God called Joshua to assume the leadership role that Moses was about to lay aside, he said to him, *"No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Joshua 1:5). Not once during all the struggles of leadership which followed did Joshua ever find himself alone. God was always at his side. Even when Joshua faced the agony of defeat at Ai, along with the emotional and spiritual pain of sin in the camp, God made himself manifest. Our God has not changed. He will still reveal himself to those who listen.

When God handed Solomon's kingdom over to Jeroboam, he said to him, *"If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you"* (1 Kings 11:38). God kept that promise through the years that followed even though Israel was often faithless. And God remains faithful to his chosen people to this day. He will never forsake those whom he has chosen for his own.

To a people who had spent generations in captivity and were about to return to their homeland, God said, *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand"*

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What's Cooking in the New Age Kitchen?

Part Four

Substituting the Ingredients

IN PREVIOUS months we have explored the origins, growth, and far-reaching impact of the New Age Movement. Now we will consider some appropriate responses for individual Christians.

The spices of evangelism

One of the best responses that Christian people and congregations can make to the New Age experience is a person-to-person approach. As Judeo-Christian traditions are becoming less acceptable within much of our culture today, Christians need to be better prepared to communicate biblical truth in a clear and effective manner. The basic discipline of evangelism is a shared responsibility of all Christians and demands more of us than quoting a Bible verse or passing out a tract. Here are some additional guidelines to keep in mind.

Prayer power: Paul reminds us that our confrontations with competing religious beliefs involve spiritual forces that we cannot see (Ephesians 6:12). New Age beliefs are part of Satan's vast arsenal which has been contrived to lead individuals away from the Christian gospel of grace. It takes more than human influence to penetrate the barriers of New Age deception. Your intercessory prayer is one of the most vital resources available. Its impact can also be magnified when shared by fellow Christians. Whenever possible, pray for the person you are interacting with before you meet. Better yet, have others pray for your encounter as it happens. When you find yourself in a spontaneous opportunity, pray silently as your exchange begins.

The loving spirit: Many New Age beliefs and practices may impress you as foolish or even bizarre. Such impressions can tilt you towards a judgmental attitude. The person's distorted claims about Christianity may even spark your anger. When it comes to attitudes and motives, however, love for the individual must reign supreme. Without it, all the apologetic dazzle in Christendom will gain little. If you have difficulty experiencing the compassion of Jesus before you engage in a comparative religions discussion, then you should wait until you do (1 Peter 3:15). Perhaps another dose of prayer power will repel the influences that are interfering.

Avoid generalizations: While acquiring a deeper understanding of the New Age Movement, it's easy to assume that anyone with a New Age identity embraces most of its fundamental principles. As in every other religion, including Christianity, the range of individual persuasion is wide. The person you are talking with may be a hard-core advocate of every primary New Age concept, or he may be a curious dabbler who is not convinced of anything yet. Ask probing questions. Explore the person's motivations and interests. Find out what his religious background is and what he truly believes about the supernatural realm (Romans 5:5).

Cultivate a relationship: Armed with a loving intent and a desire to get better acquainted, you are ready to move into vital bridge building. Without an appealing approach, what you share with a New Ager is not likely to endure. Granted, your next New Age encounter may be as brief as bus stop exchange, but you should still handle it as though it would be long-term. Look for common ground to strengthen your bond. Be alert for

If you have **difficulty** experiencing the compassion of Jesus before you engage in a comparative religions discussion, then you should **wait** until you **do** (1 Peter 3:15).

what the person considers valuable. Where does most of his attention get directed and why? If you can get more in touch with his deepest desires, you may be able to show him how Christ alone can meet his needs best. Ultimately, each person is designed to find rest in fellowship with God. Try to direct them towards him (1 John 2:20).

Clarify terms: Confusion over vocabulary can come in several basic forms. Some New Agers have appropriated popular jargon without an adequate understanding of the corresponding definitions. When someone agrees to "All is One," does he or she *really* believe we *are each other* as much as the furniture in the room or the air we breathe? Other New Agers may be clear about what they believe, but using terms with a different meaning than you do. You may both agree that the God of the Bible created the universe, but are you sure if this New Ager holds to an orthodox Christian definition of God? This New Ager may also believe that God is simply the impersonal energy which comprises all deities. While you are getting acquainted, ask what they specifically mean when referring to God, Creation, humanity, sin, salvation, and similar terms of vital significance (Proverbs 12:18).

Challenge false ideas: In part three of this series we examined how New Age beliefs conflict with biblical truth. As you get better acquainted with a New Ager, you will encounter a variety of false beliefs. The calling of the Christian is to defend the validity of biblical teaching and challenge the false teaching that surrounds us (2 Corinthians 10:5). Each Christian needs to be familiar with the essentials of the faith (basic doctrine) and how to defend it (apologetics). This is vital for individual spiritual growth, the mission of the church, and the redemption of those lost without Christ. Have you completed your basic training yet? If you have, you will be more comfortable in pursuing the strategies presented below.

Key attractions of the New Age experience

Why has the New Age Movement become so successful? What is it that resonates in individuals to generate such an eager cultural response? As we examine four primary types of appeal, we will also find corresponding doorways for a Christian witness.

Muddled religions: Christianity will always be at odds with every other religion because of its exclusive definition of God and claim to salvation. The major world religions are also in conflict with each other when it comes to defining every vital aspect of the universe. Yet we live in a society which has conditioned us to avoid such conflicts.

Some New Agers reject orthodox Christianity because it impresses them as being too narrow to be plausible. Others borrow from varied religious sources and create whatever suits their individual need, despite major doctrinal contradictions. Many embrace universalism and teach that all religions lead to the same eternal reward. The mixed variations of these themes have created a cosmic form of minestrone soup. Led by the temptation to eliminate religious conflict, misinformed assumptions have multiplied (Colossians 2:8).

The concerned Christian is challenged to present an articulate defense of the credibility of the Bible, a fair and accurate presentation of church history (New Age violations abound), and the unique salvation offered through Jesus Christ. This message should also be presented in accurate contrast to other major faiths as the New Age culture has worked overtime to blur the distinctions.

The license of relativism: Our nation is currently sinking in a mire of accumulated social dysfunction. The last three decades have delivered skyrocketing divorce rates, illegitimacy, venereal diseases, addictions, and crime. Government efforts to slow the expansion of these problems seem to be falling behind. While critics of wide political persuasions offer equally checkered explanations, those with a biblical understanding of life can see that a rebellion against responsibility has lured our society along the path of minimal obligations. Too often individual sin is quickly blamed on some form of deprivation or redefinition as a disease. In many cases preoccupation with individual rights has allowed criminals to get more assistance than their victims. In like fashion the New Age emphases on self, subjective criteria for outcomes, and elastic morality find widespread nurture from our present culture.

The Christian challenge is to expose the falsehood of a world without absolutes and related moral responsibility. While a New Ager may contend for the ultimate right to define reality anyway he chooses, there may still be more God-given conscience lingering in his soul than he realizes. Another strategy for confronting the New Age path is to press the individual to the perceived outcome of their claim to unlimited individual freedom. After you identify something sacred for the New Ager you are interacting with, see if he is truly willing to sacrifice it on the altar of someone

The more **honestly** a person seeks true fulfillment, the more **visible** the limits of human striving will become.

else's freedom which would eliminate it. Maybe then they will begin to see that freedom without virtue is ultimately another form of tyranny. No society can survive without mutually accepted restraints which come from absolutes (Isaiah 5:20).

Mystical fascinations: For many individuals, the New Age presents the same attractions that lure people into occult practices: knowledge and power that promise an improved quality of life. Many are so fascinated with paranormal phenomenon that they deny the possibility that any of it could be harmful. Spirit guides, crystal healing, psychic prophecy, past life regression, and out-of-body experiences are but a few examples. How can a Christian break through the satanic spells that have captured so many?

Aside from the powers of prayer and love mentioned earlier, two other approaches may prove useful. First, you can expose the dubious nature of some New Age practices which are often promoted with misquoted sources, modified statistics, and misrepresented scientific research. Challenge their claims with alternative evidence that exposes the deception (Ephesians 5:11). Second, you can warn New Agers of the documented evidence for the harmful risks of occult pursuits. The works of Kurt Koch are one source which describe a proliferation of character disorders, mental illness, demonic manifestations, and even suicide for those who chose to explore the occult realm.

The humanistic hope: While God did create humanity in his image, he never intended for his own demotion through the deification of humanity. The human sin of pride has perpetuated related errors since Eden. Global examples of corruption and suffering abound. Many, however, still cling to the illusion that humanity will eventually eliminate all problems (the *Star Trek* theme).

Christians need to direct the New Ager's attention to historical patterns and individual awareness. Has human civilization really improved? While technology continues to dazzle us with exponential growth, it has also magnified the harmful effects of sin. If your New Age acquaintance is especially interested with self improvement, seek to gently expose their degree of satisfaction with life. Often the most apparently successful person is concealing great spiritual and emotional discontent (Proverbs 14:12). The ultimate answer for each human heart is Jesus. Focus on his personality and purity. The more honestly a person seeks true fulfillment, the more visible the limits of human striving will become.

In like fashion the New Age **emphases** on self, subjective criteria for outcomes, and elastic morality find **widespread** nurture from our present culture.

Reinforcing your recipe

The New Age Movement is indeed dynamic. To develop the finer points of your presentation in the above topics, more detailed preparation is in order. Here are four basic sources of information to assist you.

New Age publications: While your own Bible study and use of Christian resources are supreme, knowing what the New Age community is concerned with is also valuable. Some periodicals such as the *New Age Journal* are nationally distributed. Check your nearby public or university library for a recent issue. Other local or regional titles may be as close as the corner mini-mart.

Christian publications: I get a little frustrated each time I visit my favorite Christian bookstore because there is a perpetual abundance of fine discernment material arriving, and very limited time to consume it. However, if you can free some time in your weekly schedule, informative research on the New Age awaits you. An excellent start can be found in books by Douglas Groothuis (pronounced Grow-tise), published by InterVarsity Press.

Christian fellowship: As you seek the prayer support of other Christians, also seek those who have the appropriate gifts and experience to sharpen your witness. Perhaps someone in your congregation has already interacted with New Agers. Better yet, maybe some ex-New Agers have joined your fellowship. As you assist them in basic Christian disciplines, they can share insights with you about their previous New Age life.

Specialized ministries: There are over 700 Christian discernment ministries in the United States and Canada today. While most of these are one-person operations which focus on a specific cult or practice, the larger and better known organizations have a scope of research that includes the New Age experience. Recommended examples include the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (Box 4308, Berkeley, CA 94704), the Christian Research Institute (Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693), and Acts 17 Productions (Box 430, Sandy OR 97055). Write to them and ask for their free resource catalogues.

Looking ahead

We will conclude this series on the New Age with speculations about related conspiracies, the New World Order, and the church's role in the last days. Don't forget to stop by the New Age kitchen one more time this March. ❑

Andy Bjorklund is a veteran observer of pseudo-Christian and non-Christian religious movements including the New Age Movement. He and his wife Pauline live in Seattle, Wash.

Coping with a Debilitating Disease

An Interview with Cindy Moore

Cindy is the wife of Rev. Doug Moore, pastor of the Lone Star Advent Christian Church in Clifton Forge, Virginia. Rev. and Mrs. Moore have three daughters, Christine (Klotch) (24), Tina (22), and Andrea (17). Cindy was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1988. Director of Church Relations Brent Carpenter interviewed Cindy for the 1994 WHFMS Program Kit.

Cindy, what was your first reaction when you found out you had MS?

This may sound a little strange, but I was quite relieved. I was experiencing numbness down both sides of my body. As an RN, I was expecting to hear that I had a brain tumor. MS sounded so much more manageable. Of course, at the time, I didn't know how chronic this disease would become. I had never been in contact with someone who suffered from MS. I had no real point of reference.

What sorts of things are you unable to do now that you used to take for granted?

I've always been an active person. Now I find I can't even walk long distances. This numbness and weakness can be quite difficult at times. If I overdo, I always pay later. My hands are quite numb. I can't tie my shoes, button clothes, sew, sometimes I can't even write a check. I can't work as a nurse anymore, something I really enjoyed doing, but I can't handle the IVs and much of the workload. When I get up, I have to look at my feet or I fall over. I can't tell you the number of times someone in the choir at church has caught me as I lost my balance. At present I am losing sight in my right eye, which is very difficult to deal with. It's like a shade has been pulled down over it.

How has your husband and family responded to your needs?

My husband, Doug, is the most wonderful man in the world. God knew I would need someone like him. He's kind, supportive, loving, so very patient. Sometimes this disease gets me on edge, and I don't even want to be touched. Doug knows, he empathizes and responds positively. He's also had to learn how to give me shots twice a week, sometimes in my hands. That takes lots of patience.

> I know I must lean on God for so much in my life. I have nowhere else to turn. I must surrender.

Sometimes I talk about being so numb, and my kids hate to hear it. They've always seen me in motion. I think it scares them a little. They hold me when I'm walking (or should I say I hold them). They do a lot for me, but I know they can't do everything and I don't want them to. It's a two-way street.

No one, however, really understands the pain. I have my pity parties and can feel so very isolated.

How has the church responded to your needs?

They have been wonderful. They accept me as I am. No one ever tells me what I can and cannot do. In choir sometimes I have to sit and sing, but they are just glad to have me with them.

They don't push me to do things beyond my capacity, yet they don't treat me as an invalid either. I appreciate that. Most importantly, they continue to pray for me. That means so very much.

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The Gap Between Hallmark and REALITY

Mary Jane Stone
Portland, Me.

CHRISTMAS CARDS picture a large, smiling family, around a table loaded with food. Under a decorated tree, are heaped piles of exquisitely wrapped gifts. In the background carols play softly.

In a "reality kaleidoscope" America has many pictures of Christmas. In one glimpse, adults are smiling, watching young children's wide-eyed awe of the Christmas tree. In other views, youngsters are working on gifts for mommy in school; church choirs are practicing for the holiday services. Other views show adults staggering home exhausted with a mound of gifts to dishes in the sink and bored kids; sales people, their smiles faded, rush to ring up sales; children, enthralled by the wonders of TV toys, plead for extravagant gifts their parents cannot afford; disappointed tots can't understand Santa's paltry gifts.

Many families are fractured by distance, divorce, or dissatisfaction. Frantic buying, overcrowded schedules, whiny children, and rain are the realities in many lives. Too many duties and not enough days causes anxiety and depression.

Many people dread the holidays because sad experiences, such as family deaths, or accidents are tied to holiday memories. Some family members are far away. We can be sad and defeated even when the mall is blaring music and acquaintances are verbalizing good wishes. We get depressed, then guilty if we don't "feel" like you are supposed to feel. We spend as over compensation. In the frenzy, we can double our effort, but forget our aim and loose our joy.

The missing euphoria, subtly promised and portrayed as attainable, leaves many frustrated and dissatisfied. Frantic partying and over-indulgence mask empty hearts and depression. Some people try to cover with tinsel the gaping void of disappointment and loneliness.

How can we refocus Christmas?

Focus is your main idea, where you center your thoughts and prayers, your chief goal. Recognize the gap between Hallmark and reality. Simplify your wants, scale back your expectations, and consider the many blessings you now possess. If you don't have the ideal situation, begin where you are.

Honesty about our feelings is a helpful start. Don't let the pressure of the immediate crowd out the important. Deliberately choose your emphasis. Don't be stampeded into activities or purchases. Be your own person. The music, art, and poetry of Christmas are glorious. Revel in the simple joys of preparation—at your own pace and in your own way. Replace sad memories with activities that give you joy, and contribute to the happiness of others.

Eugene Peterson, in *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* writes, "We can act ourselves into a new way of feeling much quicker than we can feel ourselves

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Hallmark from page 19

into a new way of acting." He is right.

Concentrate on your blessings—not on the trivia the media tries to force feed as essential to be "happy." Happiness is between the ears. Happiness is loving relationships and time enough to enjoy what you now have. Happiness is sharing with others during the holidays. Happiness is salvation through Calvary.

Turn off the TV. Put on *Messiah* by Handel. Set out the Advent Wreath. Simplify the menus. Read the Christmas story with the children and their friends. Get the kids to help wrap, even if gifts are less than perfectly done. Sing carols at bedtime. Can your children find some good used toys to give to a group home? Can you help a needy family with warm coats or food? If your family is miles away, invite in others who are alone to share your holiday. Going to church? Invite some of the neighbors, children or adults, to go with you. If you don't have children of your own, borrow a friend's children and give their mother a few hours break and make yourself some new memories.

Resist being squeezed into the world's mold. Focus on your blessings. Focus on others. Truly appreciate the salvation given by God through the Christ Child.

May you have a blessed Christmas and a joyous New Year! ❑

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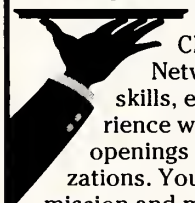

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Editorial continued from page 3

cess can and cannot accomplish. At the same time, we must encourage Christian men and women to think Christianly about the problems and issues that face our nation and world. Christian involvement in public life means far more than voting, organizing political action committees, and winning elections. Real Christian influence comes when we're willing to do the hard work of relating the Christian faith to the issues raised within the disciplines of law, communications, government, the arts, and academic education. It comes when we're willing to practice the Christian ethic of grace, compassion, and humility especially with those who might disagree with or oppose us. And it comes when we remember that no politician or political party has the final word about life. That word is spoken by Jesus. ❑

Disease continued from page 18

What has God been teaching you these past five years?

That I can't always have things my way. I had my life all planned out. The only thing was, that wasn't his plan. I've been broken. And through that brokenness I've slowly learned to depend on him. I haven't mastered that yet, but I know I must lean on him for so much in my life. I have nowhere else to turn. I must surrender.

I hate this disease. I wouldn't wish it on anyone; none of us want this. But through suffering I've learned dependence. It says in Romans 8:28, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

What are two or three things people can do to help someone facing a debilitating disease?

First, pray for them. Second, be there. Don't tell them you know just how they feel; you couldn't possibly. Just listen, hear what they are saying. Third, be available. Sometimes washing the windows or pushing someone around in a wheelchair at the mall can be tremendous acts of kindness.

MS is an expensive disease. Churches need to understand that and help financially as best they can. I needed to take a very expensive trip to Germany three years ago for medication. My church helped out financially so very much.

To sum it up, what words of advice would you give to someone facing an illness like yours?

Never give up, and never give in. Be a fighter. I don't accept this disease; I don't give in to it. I still believe that with God, I can overcome. I must stay close to him and rely on him daily. I've got so much to do. I need to maintain a positive attitude. Because of this illness, I feel I can be an effective witness to others who are suffering.

Some verses that have come to mean so much to me are:

Jeremiah 33:3, *"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."*

And Joshua 1:9, *"Have I not commanded you: Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."*

I *can* do all things through Christ and his strength. I will keep going. ❑

From the 1994 WHFMS Program Kit.

God with us continued from page 14

(Isaiah 41:10). He promised not only his presence, but also his protection and his power. God does not change. His promises are still the same.

To that same band of returning exiles, God said, *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze"* (Isaiah 43:2). God knew that it wouldn't be easy for his children back in their homeland, but he promised to be with them in times of adversity as well as prosperity. He guaranteed his unfailing presence no matter what their circumstances. Our God is still the God of Israel. His presence is still unfailing.

We needn't wait for the Christmas season to roll around to remind ourselves of the truth that God is with us. Jesus is God with us 365 days of the year. He is the living embodiment of the promise that God made to Joshua: *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). As much as we might feel otherwise, never means never. There isn't a moment when Jesus isn't by our side. Though we may forget to walk with him, he never fails to walk with us. Though we may be unaware of his presence, he is never unaware of our need. Though we may forget to seek him, Jesus never forgets about us. He is never absent. Not for a day, an hour, a minute, a single moment of time. He is the God who is there. If we look back across the sands of our life, as the poet said, and see only a single set of footprints, those are the footprints of Jesus. He faithfully carries us when, otherwise, we could not stand.

As Jesus commissioned his followers for kingdom work, he said to them, *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). If we are his followers, that promise is for us too. He is with us always. And always means always. Not sometimes, not most of the time, but all of the time without exception. Jesus is always there. When we are happy, Jesus is present. When we are sad, he is also by our side. He is with us whether we are victorious or in defeat. His hand is upon our lives no matter what our circumstances, for his presence depends not on our circumstances but on his faithfulness.

Jesus came to be God with us. He is God with us, even when it isn't Christmas. He is with you today, even if Christmas is months away. ❑

Bill O'Connor is a freelance writer, conference speaker, seminar leader, and the founder of Northwest Christian Resource Service of Newberg, Oregon. He has thirty years of ministry experience, having served six churches as Minister of Education, Minister of Youth, and Senior Pastor. He most recently completed fifteen years as Senior Pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Newberg, Oregon.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

January

1 Praise God for four Advent Christian missionary candidates under appointment for our India field: **Bill and Celia Jewell**, and **Tim and Ruth Fox**.

2 Pray that God will oversee as **visa applications** are processed for the Jewell and Fox families.

3 Praise God for the continued ministry that **Marion Damon, Beryl Joy Hollis**, and **Barbara White** continue to have with pastors and church workers in India.

4 Pray that God will use **Marion, Beryl Joy**, and **Barbara** in a special way during their last eight months in India.

5 Praise God that he has led **Warren and Jackie Prestidge** from the Conditional Immortality Fellowship in New Zealand to serve as director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

6 Pray that God will give Warren **strength and wisdom** as he begins his work at the college this month.

7 Praise God for the **expansion** of the Advent Christian missionary force during 1994 and 1995.

8 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries for new fields in **New Zealand** and **Honduras**.

9 Praise God for the opportunity that Philippine missionary **David Vignali** had to travel to mainland China.

10 Pray for David as he takes on extra **teaching responsibilities** at Oro Bible College.

11 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and church workers in the **Philippines** will touch many lives for Jesus Christ during 1995.

12 Praise God for the appointment of **George Teshera**

as Asia/Pacific area director for Advent Christian missions.

13 Pray that God will provide **strength and direction** for Rev. Teshera as he works with Advent Christian missionaries and national conference leaders.

14 Praise God for the opportunities that Advent Christian congregations in **Canada** and the **United States** had to introduce Jesus Christ to many who had not responded to the gospel.

15 Pray that God will supply the **United Ministries** needs of Advent Christian denominational work throughout 1995.

16 Pray that God will continue to give **Margaret Helms** strength and wisdom as she works to introduce Japanese people in Ono Newtown to the Christian faith.

17 Praise God for the opportunities that **Steven and Ann Lay** are having to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions while on furlough.

18 Pray that God will provide understanding to **Karen Rigney** in her study of the Japanese language.

19 Word has been received that **Rev. Ben Cleon**, president of the Liberian Advent Christian Church, and other **Liberian Advent Christian leaders** have been captured and are being detained. Pray that God will protect Rev. Cleon and others from harm.

20 Praise God for the growing ministry that **Liberian Advent Christians** are having in and around Monrovia despite the continuing civil war.

21 Pray that God will use Advent Christian congregations in **Nigeria** to touch many lives with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

22 Praise God for the students preparing for Christian ministry in Mexico through **Tecate Bible Institute**.

23 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they serve the Advent Christian Church in El Florido, Mexico.

24 Pray that God will provide national missionaries for Advent Christian church planting work in **Mexico**.

25 Pray for world mission director **Harold Patterson** as he returns home from a trip to India and Malaysia.

26 Praise God for the interest that a number of potential candidates continue to show for **missionary service**.

27 Pray for national Advent Christian missionaries in **Malaysia** as they proclaim the Christian faith in that Islamic nation.

28 Praise God for his **mercy and grace** that has been given to us through Jesus Christ

29 Pray that God will encourage **your pastor and his family** today.

30 Pray that God will use the efforts of Advent Christian congregations across Canada and the United States as we work together to expand the cause of Jesus Christ through **Penny Crusade**.

31 Pray for those who serve at the **denominational offices** in Charlotte.

Emergencies continued from page 4

What a shame that so many people (even some professed Christians) try everything else before they trust Jesus!

We are loved by Jesus

Do you remember when, on one occasion, some followers turned away from Jesus, and he asked his disciples, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68).

Jesus longs for a right relationship with every one of us today, and it grieves his heart when we go from day to day and give him no thought until trouble comes.

To me, one of the most loving and tender statements in the New Testament is the observation of Mark as he relates the story of Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler. After Jesus outlined to him the way to eternal life, and he had tried to justify himself by rehearsing his works, and then turning away, the record states, "Then Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21). Poor, mixed up young man! Thinking that salvation could be had by his own efforts or his possessions he turned away from his only hope.

Today we are pressured on every hand to believe that success is measured by power, prestige, possessions, and position! And it would seem that the average person is swallowing it hook, line, and sinker!

Have you ever deliberately listened to the excuses some people offer for not seriously considering the claims of Jesus Christ? Try it sometime and you will agree that many have put Jesus away, not just for another year, but until tragedy strikes and shocks them to their senses, or until one day when they meet Jesus at the judgment and hear, "Depart from me you who are cursed, I never knew you!"

In this "dog-eat-dog" race of life we are in, when the pressures attack from every side, it is great to know that we are loved by the Lord Jesus, who wants to have fellowship with each of us daily. Austin Miles expressed it well when he wrote:

"And he walks with me, and he talks with me,
And he tells me I am his own;
And the joys we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known!" ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor J. Ronald Schoolcraft lives in Jacksonville, Fla.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Love does not take hateful things out of our lives; its power works within our lives. If love eliminated everything we hate, we would not need its power to endure them. So again we confront the fact that we experience love *within limits*, the limits set by the realities of our lives. Love is not the secret of escape; it is the power to endure.

—*Lewis Smedes*

...it is a comparatively small thing to wish well to, or even to do good to a man who has done no evil to you. It is a much higher thing...to love your enemy, and always to wish well to, and when you have the opportunity, to do good to the man who wishes you ill, and, when he can, does you harm.

—*Augustine*

The Christian commitment is not an abstraction. It is a concrete, visible, courageous and formidable way of being in a world forged by daily choices consistent with inner truth. A commitment that is not visible in humble service, suffering, discipleship and creative love is an illusion. Jesus Christ is impatient with illusions, and the world has no interest in abstractions. "Everyone who listens to these words and does not act upon them will be like a stupid man who builds his house on sand" (Matthew 7:26). If we bypass these words of the Great Rabbi, the spiritual life will be nothing more than fantasy.

—*Brennon Manning in* Abba's Child

In every age there comes a time when leadership must come forth to meet the needs of the hour. Therefore, there is no potential leader who does not find his time. Tragically, there are times when no leader arises for the hour.

—*Cited by John Maxwell*

Despair is suffering without meaning.

—*Victor Frankl*

We seem so frightened today of being alone that we never let it happen. Even if family, friends and motives should fail, there is still radio to fill up the void... Now, instead of planting our solitude with our own dream blossoms, we choke the space with continuous music, chatter and companionship to which we do not even listen. It is simply there to fill the vacuum. When the noise stops there is no inner music to take its place.

—*Anne Morrow Lindberg*

The inner reality of the spiritual world is available to all who are willing to search for it. Often I have discovered that those who so freely debunk the spiritual world have never taken ten minutes to investigate whether or not such a world really exists.

—*Richard Foster*

In other words. . .

Feelings are the scourge of prayer. To pray by feelings is to be at the mercy of glands and weather and digestion. And there is no mercy in any of them. Feelings lie. Feelings deceive. Feelings seduce. Because they are so emphatically there, and so incontrovertibly interior, it is almost inevitable that we take our feelings seriously as reputable guides to the reality that is deep within us—our hearts before God.

But feelings are no more spiritual than muscles. They are entirely physical. They are real and important in the same way that our fingernails and noses are important— we would not want to live without them (although we could if we had to), but their length and shape and color tell us nothing about our life with God. To suppose that our emotions in any way give us reliable evidence of the nature or quality of our life with God is to misinterpret them. They are wonderful and necessary and glorious. They are part of the rich and stunning complexity of the human being in the image of God. We must value and develop and share them.

But they are not prayer. All the spiritual masters are careful to guide us in a detachment from our feelings as a means for discerning grace or guiding prayer. St. John of the Cross, as passionate and earthy a man as ever lived, had little patience with people who indulged their 'spiritual sweet tooth' and then lapsed into 'spiritual gluttony.'

—*Eugene Peterson in* Answering God

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